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FUNDAMENTALS *of* RELIGION

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TO THE SWEET-SAD MEMORY OF
MY MOTHER
AND
MY CHILDREN'S MOTHER

PREFACE

Writers on Religion generally deal with one or the other of three distinct, though intimately related, themes—Philosophy of Religion, History of Religion, and the Psychology of Religious consciousness. The first of these themes provides material for the small book now presented to the reader. It deals with the Fundamentals of Religion as conceived in four principal Religions that claim the allegiance of the major portion of mankind. For a book like the present, it is possible to adopt one of the two plans—

(i) to present each topic in a mosaic form, i.e., to bring together the views expressed on it by the different Religions considered; and

(ii) to let each of the Religious systems selected speak on all the cognate topics and present its view-point in an unified, synthesized manner.

The writer has chosen to adopt the second mode of treatment.

The problems for religious enquiry are largely the same, but the solutions offered by the organised Religions unfortunately are sometimes not only widely divergent, but also opposed to each other. Some persons look upon Truth as a Dog asleep, and would like it to keep asleep rather than wake up and begin to bark or bite. Others have a higher conception of the value of Truth. The last

words that Goethe, on his death-bed, is reported to have spoken, were—'*More Light!*'

Of the four Religions considered in the book, two—Christianity and Islam—are of semitic origin and largely draw from a common source. Islam borrows a lot from Christianity, and some Christian writers go so far as to regard it as a sect of Christian dissenters. Buddhism had its birth in India and, after a prosperous career for several centuries, practically collapsed. However, before it collapsed in India, it had spread to a number of countries beyond the frontiers of India. In the result, while it is no more than 'a sacred relic' in India, it still dominates the thought and practice of several other countries in Asia. The fourth and the last chapter in the book deals with the teaching of the Vedas and their commentaries, the Upanishads. In regard to the Vedic point of view on the various questions discussed, a change of tremendous significance was wrought in the last century by the work of the great revivalist—reformer, Swami Dayanand, the founder of the Arya Samaj. The writer is unable to give even a very inadequate expression to the debt of gratitude that he owes to Swami Dayanand.

The writer hopes that the reader may find the expositions offered to be of some interest and of some small value.

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CHAPTER I

CHRISTIANITY

1. THE CHRISTIAN SCRIPTURES

The Christian Scriptures are commonly known as the Bible. The word Bible is derived from Greek *biblia* (books). It is also called the Book, the Good Book, the Word of God, the Scriptures. It consists of two parts—the Old Testament and the New Testament. The word Testament is now used in a wider sense, but in the Biblical sense, it means a covenant, a dispensation or a compact between God and His chosen people. The Old Testament is the Scripture of the Jews; the New Testament specifically of the Christians. The Christians accept the Old Testament as a part of their scriptures, but most of them, probably all, assign to the New Testament a higher authority than to the Old Testament. The Jews regarded themselves as the elect or the chosen people, and they looked upon their religion as a compact between God and themselves. This is why their Scripture was known as the Testament. Jesus was a Jew, but he decided to found a new religion or a cult. He himself left nothing in writing. The new doctrine that he preached was given in the form of discourses and talks, making a liberal and

effective use of parables. This form of exhortation was specially suited to the intellectual level of the people among whom he had to work. The Old Testament was written in Hebrew, the language of the Jews. It comprises writings that were written in the course of about a thousand years. The teachings of Jesus were not recorded during his life-time, or by any of his contemporaries. Nor were they recorded in the land where he was born and worked, or in the language which he spoke. After his death, the message that he had given passed beyond the frontiers of Israel. Among other places it reached Greece. There some men who had adopted the doctrine committed his teachings to writing. They were Hebrews, but wrote in Greek. This is believed to have been done between 50 and 70 years after the death of Jesus. The language that they employed was not classical Greek, but the dialect in use among people who had come from diverse regions and were now living together in Greece. Jesus had denied the Jewish claim of their being a chosen people with whom God had entered into a special and exclusive covenant. All men, as children of God, were equal and the message of Jesus was meant for all. When the story of his life and teachings was recorded, his followers were probably allured by the conception of covenant, as used by the Hebrews, and applied it to the new religion. The new scriptures were called the New Testament.

The Old Testament, the larger division of the Bible, consists of 39 books. The first five are ascribed to Moses and possess very high authority. They are—*Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers* and *Deuteronomy*. The Old Testament is largely taken up with the sufferings and achievements of the Jewish community for a period of about a thousand years. The most notable feature of their history during this period is that it is largely mixed up with divine intervention. As a result of the covenant entered into between God and the Jews, the latter became the chosen people of God, and God never forgot them in their difficulties.

comp The New Testament consists of 27 books. Five of them are in the form of historical narratives, twenty-one in the form of Epistles, and the 27th is the Revelation of St. John. Of the five historical narratives, four relate the story of the life of Jesus, while the fifth describes the formation and extension of the Church by some leading apostles. Thirteen of the Epistles bear the name of St. Paul. The four historical narratives, known as the gospels, narrate the story of the life and work of Jesus, and give a fairly comprehensive view of his teachings, often giving the very words Jesus is supposed to have used in his discourses. Three of them, written by Mathew, Mark and Luke, and known as the *synoptic* gospels, are supposed to have been written about A.D. 70; the fourth, written by John, followed after the lapse of

four or five decades. During the first four centuries, opinion differed about the canon of the New Testament. Some writings were acknowledged as authoritative, while others were controverted. Since then, the canon has remained unchanged.

The four gospels occupy a unique position in the New Testament. They have captivated the imagination of the Christians through the ages, and many of those who no longer profess Christianity still turn to the life of Jesus for solace and inspiration. The gospel of John differs from the other gospels in its character. It is not so much a story of the life of Jesus as a comment on that story, as told in the three earlier gospels. The three synoptics, though almost contemporaneous, have their own characteristics. They differ in regard to the events recorded and sometimes these differences are quite material. However, it is not the discrepancies, but coincidences of phrases and expressions that so much puzzle the modern reader. Some scholars hold that they all derived material from an earlier record, now not traceable, and chose according to their individual judgments and likings. The distinctive features of the four gospels may be briefly given as follows:—

(a) *Mark's Gospel.*

It is the shortest and supposed to be the earliest of the gospels. It is a record of what Jesus *did*, rather than

what he *said*. The deeds of Jesus narrated are generally those which were witnessed by Peter. This has led some people to conclude that Mark was a disciple and interpreter of Peter.

It gives numerous explanations of Jewish manners and topography. On this ground, it is assumed to have been intended mainly for the non-Jewish members of the new church.

It makes no mention of the parentage, birth or early life of Jesus. It starts with Jesus' coming from Nazareth and being baptised by John, the baptist.

It deals very briefly with the resurrection of Jesus, and the verses dealing with the ascension are suspected to be later additions. They are not found in the earliest-extant manuscripts.

(b) Mathews' Gospel.

This is probably the next oldest and seems to have been written mainly for the Jews. Unlike Mark, Mathew does not explain Jewish customs and topography, and assumes a knowledge thereof in his readers.

This gospel also refers to Jesus as the son of David no less than eight times, probably with the object of appealing to Jewish sentiment.

The main purpose of Mathew, it seems, is to present Jesus as the promised Messiah, of whom the prophets had spoken.

(c) *Luke's Gospel.*

It is a composition by a man of scholarly attainments. It is written in a language more literary than that used in the gospels of Mark and Mathew. Luke is also the author of another book in the New Testament, and is by some believed to have been a companion and friend of St. Paul.

Like Mark's gospel, Luke's gospel too seems to have been designed for the gentile converts: it too explains Jewish customs. Luke writes in the first person and dedicates his book to a friend, named Theophilus.

(d) *John's Gospel.*

This stands apart from the other three gospels. It has been characterised as *the earliest commentary* on the synoptics, the three earlier gospels.

It omits many of the events recorded in the other gospels.

It omits the parables and also the Sermon on the mount, which is generally regarded as the kernel of the ethical teaching of Jesus.

It omits all miracles except eight, and does not give a single miracle about the casting out of devils. This omission is very significant. Probably, John himself or the Christians of his time generally had no faith in the 'possession' of men by devils, and regarded the reported cases as ordinary maladies.

While John omits much, he also gives some additional matter. Four of the eight miracles mentioned by him are peculiar to his gospel. They include the most notable of all, the raising of Lazarus after he had been dead four days.

The discourses of Jesus, as given in the synoptics, are in the form of short sayings; in John, they are long and elaborate expositions.

John's gospel gives additional details regarding the appearance of Jesus after his resurrection. John, who wrote several decades after the other gospels were written, seems to have been anxious to embellish the narrative as given by the other gospels.

Among the other writings of the New Testament, the Epistles of St. Paul occupy a high place. St. Paul gave the Christian doctrine a definitive form. Some persons assess his work so high that they refer to him as the second founder of Christianity. There are others who maintain that some dogmas now preached in the churches are Pauline rather than Christian.

2. THE LIFE OF JESUS

Parentage and birth of Jesus.

Of the four gospels, two have not a word to say on the parentage and birth of Jesus. The gospel of St. Mark, the earliest of the gospels, starts the narrative of the life of Jesus with his baptism by John, the baptist. The

gospel of John, the latest of the four, begins with the statement—'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.' Then we are told about John, the baptist, that he 'came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light that all men through him might believe.' Like Mark, John entirely passes over the parentage and birth of Jesus.

The Gospel of Mathew opens thus—'The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.' Verse 17 says that there were fourteen generations from Abraham to David, and 28 generations from David to Jesus. This much about the genealogy of Jesus. The eight verses that follow give an account of the birth of Jesus, two of them referring to a prophecy about it. The remaining six verses read thus:—

"Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: when as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.

Then Joseph, her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily.

But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.

And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his

name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins."

"Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife:

And knew her not till she had brought forth her first-born son: and he called his name Jesus."

(Mathew; I: 18-21, 24-25).

The account, as given by Luke, differs from the foregoing account in some material points. Luke's account is merely an amplification of the immaculate conception of Mary, and leaves out Joseph altogether.

... The Angel Gabriel was sent from God into a city of Galilee, named Nazareth.

To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary.' The angel Gabriel came in unto Mary and hailing her, said, 'The Lord is with thee.' 'She was troubled at his saying and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be.' Gabriel reassured her and told her that she would conceive in her womb and bring forth a son. He directed her to name the boy Jesus, and added that her son 'shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.'

The talk between Gabriel and Mary is given in 11 verses. (I: 28-38). It will be noticed that in Luke—
(i) it is not an unnamed angel, but Gabriel that comes down with a message, (ii) he comes to Mary and not to

Joseph; and (iii) he visits her not in a dream, but in the waking condition. About the circumstances of the birth of Jesus, Luke goes into some details. The second chapter of his gospel opens thus: 'And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed.' 'And all went to be taxed everyone into his own city.' Joseph with Mary, great with child, came into Judaea, to be taxed. There Mary 'brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.'

Of all this there is nothing in Mathew's book.

Early Life.

The life of Jesus may be divided into three periods—

(a) Upto the age of 12.

(b) From the 13th to the 30th year.

(c) From the 30th year to the time of the crucifixion: the three years of ministry.

Of the four gospels, those of Mark and John start with the baptism of Jesus by John the baptist at the age of thirty. The remaining two gospels have nothing to say about the second, the longest period of his life. Thus only two of the gospels give us some information about the early life of Jesus, none about the second part, and all concentrate on the three years of ministry, ending in the crucifixion of Jesus.

About the early years, the information furnished by the gospels of Mathew and Luke is quite meagre, and, strangely enough, they have not much in common. According to Luke, the birth of Jesus was announced by an angel to a number of shepherds who were keeping a watch over their flocks by night in the fields. They came to Bethlehem and found 'Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.' According to Mathew, some wise men of the East, as directed by a star, came to Jerusalem to worship the new-born babe. They referred to Jesus as 'King of Jews.' When Herod, the king, heard these things, 'he was troubled and all Jerusalem with him.' An angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and directed him 'to take the young child and his mother and flee into Egypt,' 'for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him.' When Joseph arose, he did as he was directed to do, and remained in Egypt till the death of Herod, when, again directed by the angel, he came back to Galilee.

This story, all that is given us about the early life of Jesus in Mathew, is omitted in Luke. Luke, however, tells us about the circumcision of Jesus on the 8th day and his presentation in the temple at Jerusalem on the 40th day. He also tells us that when Jesus was twelve years old, Joseph and Mary, as was their practice, went to Jerusalem at the annual 'feast of the passover,' and took Jesus with them. The feast over, they returned, but,

unnoted by them, Jesus tarried behind. When at the end of the day's journey, they failed to find Jesus in the crowds, they went back to Jerusalem in search of him. After three days they found him in the temple, 'sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions.' They brought him back to Nazareth.

This is all we get from the gospels about the life of Jesus till the time when he was baptised by John the baptist. It appears that his personality, during the period of its growth, was profoundly influenced by the study of certain portions of the Old Testament and the simple sights of the country. His discourses and parables bear ample testimony to this.

Initiation and the Temptation.

The opening chapters of Mark and John, and the third chapters of Mathew and Luke introduce us to John the baptist. He was a remarkable man. 'He had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey.' He believed that he was the forerunner of the Messiah, of whom the old prophets had spoken. He transformed baptism from a rite of *conversion* to one of *purification*, and began to baptise the Jews also. As used by him, baptism was associated with a confession of repentance and of the faith of John. Jesus also 'came from Galilee

to Jordon and John to be baptised by him.' John baptised him.

The way the initiation of Jesus is described by the evangelists throws some light on their mental attitudes and thus possesses some psychological interest. According to Mark, 'Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptised of John in Jordon.' But John's baptism was of a purificatory character, and believing as John did that Jesus was the promised Messiah, he could not baptise Jesus without some compunction. Mathew elaborates the account of the ceremony a little. When Jesus asked John to baptise him, 'John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptised of thee, and comest thou to me?' Jesus insisted and John baptised him. Luke says that when all the people were baptised, it came to pass that Jesus also was baptised. He finds an escape in making the baptism of Jesus an unindividualised item in a collective ceremony. John, the last of the evangelists, took a more courageous step. He makes no mention of the baptism of Jesus by John the baptist. He only says that John bare record, saying, 'I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him.'

After his initiation, Jesus went to the wilderness, where he stayed forty days and nights, fasting and meditating. There, at the end of the fast, he was tempted by Satan in diverse ways, but remained unshaken. Then the Devil left him and angels came and ministered unto

him. Jesus came back, and leaving Nazareth began to reside in Capornaam. And he began to preach his message.

The Ministry of Jesus.

The period of the ministry was very short, about three years only, but these three years were extraordinarily busy years, and, judging from the results achieved, were very fruitful. In the words of Mathew, 'Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the Kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.'

✓ (4: 23). The burden of his preaching was—'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.'

His cure of diseases was *miraculous*: he touched the patient or simply told him that he was healed, and the man was healed. Another important class of cures was the exorcizing of evil spirits from the bodies of men. These acts of mercy were supposed to be evidence of the divinity of Jesus. A more conclusive evidence was the raising of the dead. John, the last of the evangelists, mentions only eight of the miracles of Jesus, four of them not mentioned in the earlier gospels. He omits all miracles dealing with the exorcizing of evil spirits. The most startling case, among his own additions, was that of ✓ Lazarus who was restored to life after he had been dead four days!

The deeds of mercy performed by Jesus endeared him to the people, and wherever he went, thongs of men gathered round him. His main business was preaching a new message. What he said captivated the imagination of some and revolted others. The majority of the people of Judaea were illiterate and poor. For men of this class it is easy to be persuaded that they are low because they are suppressed. They looked upon themselves as victims of oppression by the upper classes and the self-righteous priests. Jesus gave them a message of hope and good cheer. The kingdom of God was near at hand and this kingdom belonged to them, but on one condition that they repent of their sins and have faith in God. As to the rich who were exploiting them, admission to the kingdom of God was out of the question. 'It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.' The means for entrance into the kingdom of God were within the reach of the poor, even the meanest of them. But when would this come about? Jesus gave them to understand that it would come about during the life-time of many of those that heard him. We can well imagine what a comfort it was to the simple people of Judaea to receive such a message of hope.

His message which brought solace to the poor was a source of considerable annoyance to the Jewish priests, the Pharisees and the Scribes. The main factors responsible

for the estrangement were the following:—

1. Jesus claimed to be the 'promised Messiah' and 'the King of the Jews.' This claim, as the Jews clearly recognised, had far-reaching implications. If Jesus was what he claimed to be, his appearance meant the supersession of the old Covenant and the establishment of a new Covenant between God and man.

2. Jesus and his followers showed scant regard for the practices and usages to which the Jews attached great importance. He declared that he was 'greater than the temple,' and 'Lord even of the sabbath day.' His followers were not particular about washing before taking their meals. Jesus did not regard circumcision obligatory. The Jews regarded the flesh of camels, swine and certain other animals as unclean; Jesus made no such distinction.

3. Jesus, though considerate and tolerant to the sinners and harlots, was very vehement in his denunciation of the Jewish priests. Mathew, chapter 23, furnishes some striking illustrations. Verses 13, 14, 15, 23, 25, and 29 begin with the words—'Woe unto you, scribes and pharisees, hypocrites!' Verse 16 addresses them as 'blind guides;' verses 17 and 19 as 'fools and blind;' verse 33, as 'serpents, generation of vipers.' And on Jerusalem, he pronounced an imprecation—"There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down."

The pharisees and scribes were the main objects of

his attack, but his attention was not confined to them. He was also regarded as a political revolutionary. He claimed to be 'the King of the Jews,' and further maintained that soon enough his sway would be universal. Judaea was then under Roman rule. The authorities could not ignore the effect that such claims might have on the illiterate masses. Jesus had certainly become a disturber of peace, and this was enough to induce the authorities to take some action against him. Jesus himself realized that matters were swiftly heading to a pass.

One day when he, followed by his twelve chosen disciples, was going to Jerusalem, 'he began to tell them what things should happen unto him.'

He told them that he would be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes, who would condemn him to death and deliver him to the Gentiles. The Gentiles (non-Jewish civil authorities), so he added, would mock and scourge him, would spit upon him, and would kill him, but on the third day he shall rise again! A few days later, when they, Jesus and the twelve disciples, were dining together, he told them that one of them would betray him. Then they went into the mount of olives. Jesus said to them; 'All ye shall be offended because of me this night.' Peter protested that whatever others might do, he certainly would not be offended. Jesus retorted that that very night, before the cock crew twice, Peter would deny him thrice. Jesus, separating himself

from his disciples, 'fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him.'

Then came Judas, one of the twelve, with a great multitude. As prearranged, Judas kissed Jesus to indicate him and they apprehended Jesus. His disciples 'all forsook him and fled.' Jesus was led away to the high priest.

Trial and Crucifixion.

With the high priest were assembled the chief priests and the elders and the scribes. 'Peter followed him afar off, even into the palace of the high priest.' Finding nothing definite against Jesus, the high priest asked him whether he was the Christ, the son of the Blessed. Jesus said he was. The priests thought this blasphemy was enough and 'they all condemned him to be guilty of death.' Peter who was beneath in the palace, denied him thrice before the cock crew twice. As the priests had no authority to inflict such a punishment themselves, they delivered Jesus to Pilate, the Governor. After a brief trial, Pilate ordered Jesus to be crucified. Jesus was crucified, with two thieves, one on his right and the other on his left. Six hours after he was placed on the cross, Jesus cried with a loud voice; 'Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthane?' which is, being interpreted, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' And then 'Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost.'

The account of the crucifixion as given above is based

on Mark's gospel. Mathew, and he alone, is kind to ✓ Judas. According to him, after Jesus had been condemned to death, Judas was smitten with remorse, went to the priests and expressed his sorrow for having betrayed an innocent man. He threw to them the thirty silver coins which he had received from them for his perfidy; went out and hanged himself! Luke is more concerned with exalting the spiritual side of Jesus himself. When on the cross, Jesus prayed: 'Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.' John the commentator-✓ evangelist, gives a human touch to the character of Jesus in his last moments. He alone brings in Mary, the mother of Jesus, whom we had almost forgotten. According to John, Mary was present at the place of crucifixion, ✓ 'standing by the cross of Jesus.' Jesus saw her and entrusted her to the care of a beloved disciple, not named, who took Mary unto his own home.'

Thus ended the brief but extraordinarily active period of the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth. The dead body was handed over to a man, named Joseph, who 'wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a sepulchre that was hewn in stone, wherein never man before was laid.'

3. THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE

The main problems of the philosophy of Religion concern the nature of God, Man, and the World, and their mutual relationships. We shall consider the Christian

doctrine under the following heads:—

- ✓ (a) Cosmology or the nature and origin of the World.
 - (b) Theology or the nature of God.
 - (c) Rational Psychology or the nature of the finite Spirit.
 - (d) Ethics or the study of man's obligations as a rational being.
- (a) *Cosmology.*

The first book in the Old Testament, *Genesis*, opens with an account of Creation.

'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the waters.

And God said, Let there be Light: and there was light.'

On the second day, God made the firmament and called it Heaven. On the third day, all waters under the heaven were gathered together and were called seas. On the fourth day followed 'lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night.' 'And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also.' On the fifth day were produced from the water the 'living moving creatures and the winged fowl.' On the

sixth day, God created 'cattle, creeping thing and beast of the earth.'

And 'God created man in His own image;' 'male and female created he him.'

Thus ended the creation of heaven and earth in six days.

In the second chapter of *Genesis*, we are told that God 'rested on the seventh day from his work which he had made;' and blessed and sanctified the day because 'in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.'

The 'Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.'

The synoptic gospels in the New Testament are biographical in character and don't speak of the creation of the World. We may assume that they accept the Cosmology of the Old Testament. The gospel of John is doctrinal and John has something to say on the point. However, John speaks more of the Creator than of Creation. In the Old Testament, Creation is exclusively the work of God. John, like the other evangelists, believed in the divinity of Jesus. Was Jesus anyway connected with the work of creation? If he was, what part did he play in it? John probably had no clear views on the question. His gospel opens thus:—

'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God.

The same was in the beginning with God.

All things were made by him: and without him was not anything made that was made.'

Here we are left in doubt whether Jesus was solely responsible for the creation of the world; or was merely a necessary factor in its creation. St. Paul, who preached before any gospel was written, expressed his views less ambiguously. Here are two excerpts from his Epistles:—

'But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.' (I *Cor.* 8: 6).

'God created all things by Jesus Christ.' (*Eph.* 3: 9).

This seems to imply that by virtue of the authority delegated to him by God, Jesus created the World.

(b) *Theology.*

The Old Testament teaches unqualified Monotheism. God is one, without a second. The most sacred name applied to God among the Jews is Yehovah or Yahweh. He was the invisible King of Israel, worshipped by obedience to His commands and the due performance of ceremonies established by the Law. Due to the awe that the name inspired, the Hebrews did not pronounce it. This name, however, God assumed rather late.

In *Exodus*, we read:—

"And God spake unto Moses, and said unto him, I am the Lord:

And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by my name Jehovah was I not known to them." (6: 2-3).

This is confirmed by *Genesis* (17:1)

Another prominent feature of the Old Testament conception of God is its gross anthropomorphism. As we have already seen, 'God created man in his own image.' This statement was understood in the literal sense of the words. The writers of the books in the Old Testament, like ourselves, knew men better than they knew God, and conceived God after the image of man, almost as one of them. When Adam and Eve, tempted by the serpent, had eaten of the forbidden fruit, 'their eyes were opened and they knew that they were naked.' They sewed fig leaves together and covered themselves. 'And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: And Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.

And the Lord God called unto Adam, where art thou?' (*Gen.* 3: 8-9).

Almost at random, we can pick up similar expressions in the other books of the Old Testament.

The conception of Godhead, as presented in the New Testament, is a radical modification of the Old Testa-

ment conception in both the aspects. For the pure monotheism of the Old Testament, the New Testament substitutes a highly complex notion of the triune nature of God; for its grossly anthropomorphic conception of God, the New Testament substitutes the notion of a spiritual being, suffering from some limitations, but still a Holy Loving Spirit. Let us consider these two aspects a little.

The triune nature of God, commonly known as Trinity, is a complex and confusing conception, and has been a source of endless controversy in Christian theology. The doctrine is not explicitly stated in the gospels, but we get a glimpse of it quite early. When Jesus was baptised by John, the Holy Spirit descended upon him in the form of a dove, and there came a voice from Heaven, saying 'Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' (Mark, 1: 9-11).

Jesus himself did not use baptism as a symbol of conversion, but he directed his disciples to go forth and baptise people 'in the name of Father, Son and the Holy Spirit.' This simple statement would ordinarily suggest the existence of three divinities, but Christians were not prepared to discard the monotheism of the Old Testament. What was to be done? The Holy Spirit could be regarded as the divine influence exercised for spiritual and moral ends, but Jesus, the Son, could not be regarded as an aspect or attribute of God. The consensus of opinion

has regarded all the three as 'persons,' united in some inexplicable manner in a single Person. As regards the status of the three 'persons,' there has been no unanimity. Probably the most widely accepted view is the one formulated by St. Athanasius. It is as follows:—

'The Father is made of none: neither created, nor begotten. The Son is of the Father alone: not made nor created, but begotten. The Holy Ghost is of the Father and of the Son: neither made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding. So there is one Father, not three Fathers: one Son, not three Sons: one Holy Ghost, not three Holy Ghosts. And in this Trinity none is afore, or after other: none is greater, or less than another: but the whole three Persons are co-eternal together: and co-equal.' And Athanasius adds: 'This is the Catholic Faith: which except a man believe faithfully, he cannot be saved.'

The Divinity of Jesus.

The characteristic doctrine of Christianity, the corner-stone of the entire edifice, is the divinity of Jesus. But for this, it would not be easy to distinguish between Judaism and Christianity. Jesus often referred to himself as the son of man, but there is no doubt that he regarded himself as the son of God as well.

The divinity of Jesus is said to be mainly grounded on the following considerations:—

(i) *The immaculate conception of Mary.*

(ii) Miracles performed by Jesus.

(iii) The resurrection and ascension of Jesus.

A few words about these considerations will not be out of place.

(i) We have already referred to the immaculate conception of Mary. As we have seen, two of the four gospels—Mark and John—do not even refer to the matter. The gospels of Mathew and Luke speak of it, but their accounts disagree on some material points. An angel had to intervene. According to Mathew, his business was with Joseph and with him alone—to dissipate his suspicions about Mary; according to Luke, the angel was solely concerned with Mary and had to set her perplexed mind at rest.

(ii) *Miracles performed by Jesus.*

A miracle, as ordinarily understood, is a deviation from the normal course of Nature, produced by supernatural intervention, with a spiritual or moral end in view. The miracles alleged to have been performed by Jesus all conform to this description. The common end subserved by them was a vindication of the claim that Jesus was the Son of God. Objectively considered, miracles may be divided into two classes: those in which the miraculous act is natural, but the means employed are not natural; and those in which the result of the act itself is unnatural.

Among the miracles belonging to the first category are cures of diseases like blindness by mere touch of hand or by the spoken word. To the same category belongs the cure of mental diseases, then regarded as 'possession' by an evil spirit. The raising of the dead belongs to the second category. The gospels speak of both kinds of miracles having been performed by Jesus.

(iii) *The resurrection of Jesus.*

As we have already seen, Joseph received the dead body of Jesus, 'when the evening was come,' and laid it in the tomb which he had hewn out in the rock. This happened on Friday. On the following day, the chief priests and pharisees obtained permission of Pilate 'to have a watch.' Next morning, on Sunday, it was found that the body of Jesus was not in the tomb. The gospels all declare that Jesus came to life again, and, after his resurrection, appeared to a number of persons on several occasions. Their accounts differ in details, but on the main point they are all at one. Paul attached the highest importance to the resurrection of Jesus: 'If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.'

As regards the *ascension* of Jesus, Mathew makes no reference and John no explicit reference to it. Most of the Christians believe that Jesus was taken up in body, in his human form.

(c) *Rational Psychology: the Nature and Destiny of the Individual.*

Neither the writers of the Old Testament nor Jesus had much to say on metaphysics. In consequence, the account of the nature of man that we get in the Bible is meagre and confused. In the first chapter of *Genesis*, we are told that 'God created man in His own image;' in the second, that 'God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.' This description implies that man shares his physical nature with 'beasts and birds, but has two special characteristics—

(1) He was formed in the image of God.

(2) He had the breath of life breathed into his nostrils, on which he became a living soul.

Eve was formed of a rib which the Lord God had taken from Adam, after causing a deep sleep to fall on him. Presumably, as an outgrowth of Adam, Eve too became 'a living soul.' We cannot be sure of this, because the point whether woman has a soul was a disputed point in the early church.

About ourselves, the position is obscure. Probably we inherit both the body and the soul of Adam. Never again did God breathe in any nostrils the breath of life. In case of Jesus alone, as John tells us, 'the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.'

*(d) Christian Ethics.**Original Sin.*

The basic doctrine in the Christian Ethics is that of original sin. The incarnation of Jesus and his crucifixion were necessitated by the Fall of Man. Adam and Eve disobeyed an explicit command of God and become sinners. As their progeny, we are all born in sin. This is exceedingly unfortunate. How did it come about?

Of the beasts of the field that God had created, the serpent was more subtle than any other beast. He persuaded Eve to eat the fruit that God had forbidden Adam and Eve to eat. Eve ate it and gave it to her husband, who also ate it. When God discovered it, He cursed the serpent. 'Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children.' To Adam He said, 'Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life.' And 'the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken.'

The sufferings of men and women are due to their sinfulness inherited from their first parents.

Ethics of the Old Testament.

Through a covenant into which God entered with Abraham, the Hebrews became the chosen people, and God

guided them as occasion arose. The best known of His commandments to them are the ten commandments given to Moses on mount Sinai. They are given in *Exodus* (20) and are as follows:—

1. Thou shalt have no other gods before me.
2. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image or any likeness of anything . . . Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them.
3. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.
4. Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.
5. Honour thy father and thy mother.
6. Thou shalt not kill.
7. Thou shalt not commit adultery.
8. Thou shalt not steal.
9. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.
10. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbour's.

The Old Testament contains a lot of records of the doings of prophets and patriarchs—the latter being the twelve sons of Jacob from his two concubines. These records are referred to as 'sacred' history, but many of them have nothing sacred, even decent, about them.

Genesis tells us of Lot and his two daughters who lived with him in a mountain cave.

'And the first-born said unto the younger, Our father is old, and there is not a man in the earth to come in unto us after the manner of all the earth:

Come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him, that we may preserve seed of our father.

And they made their father drink wine that night and the first-born went in, and lay with her father, and he perceived not when she laid down, nor when she arose.'

The younger daughter of Lot repeated the following night the performance of her elder sister. 'Thus were both the daughters of Lot with child by their father.' (19: 31-33, 36).

Other passages of a similar nature could be cited without difficulty.

Ethics of the New Testament.

The ethics of the New Testament is a great advance upon the ethics of the Old Testament. For one thing, the gospels are records of a single exalted life, and so are free from the type of the stuff that offends us in the Old Testament. Secondly, Jesus looked at the problem of morality from a very different angle. He amended the old code of morals in two important aspects. He pulled down the barriers that had stood between the Jew and the Gentile. Secondly, he shifted emphasis from overt

action to the underlying motive, and thus spiritualised moral life.

Once a pharisee, a lawyer, asked him: 'Master, which is the great commandment in the law?

Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

This is the first and great commandment.

And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.' (Math. 22: 36-40).

In greater detail, the ethical doctrine of Jesus is embodied in the sermon on the mount. In this sermon, Jesus laid great stress on the virtue of non-violence in social relations.

'Ye resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.

And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also.'

A part of this instruction is embodied in Luke, chapter 6, but it finds no place in Mark, the earliest evangelist, and in John, who wrote several decades after the others had written and knew about the contents of the synoptics. But John makes ample amends for the omission—in his own way. In five chapters, he gives the discourses of Jesus to the Jews bearing on his ethical doctrine, and just

when the end was near at hand, he makes Jesus give a long parting address to his disciples.

4. THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE REVIEWED

With the foregoing picture of the Christian doctrine in our mind, we may now bring the doctrine under a brief review. The order in which the review will proceed will be the same as followed in the exposition.

(a) *Cosmology*

According to the Old Testament, the heaven and the earth and all that is in them were created in six days.

The main points in this account are:—

(1) God created the heaven and the earth *out of nothing*.

(2) Day and night came into being before the earth and the great heavenly lights were created.

(3) The earth was created before the sun was created.

(4) The sun and the moon were 'set in the firmament in the heaven to give light upon the earth.'

(5) The process of creation was completed in six days.

As to the size of the world, we have no explicit statement, but we may have some idea of the wealth of animal life that existed upon the earth just before the Deluge. Noah was commanded by God to make an ark of gopher wood in the following manner:—

'The length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits,

the breadth of it fifty cubits, and the height of it thirty cubits.' The ark was to accommodate Noah, his sons, his wife and his sons' wives from amongst human beings, and of every living thing of all flesh, two of every sort—a male and a female. .

From the point of view of metaphysics, the only point that possesses significance is the creation of the world out of nothing. The remaining points concern physical science. As regards the origin of the Universe, three alternative explanations are generally offered—Creation, Emanation and Design. According to Creationism, the world was created out of nothing; according to the theory of Emanation, a part of the Divine Being became the World; according to the theory of Design, the stuff of the world was there from all eternity, and the emergence of the world as a cosmos is only a determinate arrangement of the ultimate reals into compounds.

In regard to all there is in heaven and on earth besides man, the Bible does without doubt support the theory of creationism. About man himself, the position is not quite clear. *Genesis* (2: 7) tells us that 'the Lord formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.' Where did this 'breath of life,' which was breathed into man alone and which made him 'a living soul,' come from? Probably it was not a part of the dust of the ground, but of the substance of God Himself. If so,

man was partially an emanation from God. The position is obscure and we may leave it without further discussion. As regards the creation of the material world, including all sentient other than man, it is difficult to understand how Being can come out of not-Being. Physical Science which specialises in the study of matter knows nothing of creation or annihilation of matter; it knows only of transformations of matter.

The remaining points in the cosmology of the Bible concern Science rather than Philosophy. Science certainly is not dogmatic and offers its conclusions as 'provisional truth.' But some of its conclusions are now almost on the plane of certainty. It would not be easy to find an educated man who today believes in the validity of the account of creation as given in the Old Testament. We understand Day to mean the time when the sun is above horizon, and Night to mean the time from sunset to sunrise. We can attach no meaning to the statement that Day and Night were created before the earth and the sun were created. Nor do we accept the view that the earth is older than the sun and the sun is merely an appendage to the earth.

Basing their calculations on the genealogies given in the Bible, scholars are of the opinion that the world is about six thousand years old. Modern science pushes the origin of the earth back to two thousand million years ago. In place of the snug little universe of the Bible, modern

science tells us that the universe is a vast immensity, in which, in the words of Sir James Jeans, our earth is 'a millionth part of a grain of sand out of all the sea-sand in the world.' Our sun is a small star and the radius of the orbit in which the earth moves round it is believed to be about 9,20,90,000 miles.

(b) *Theology*

The very core of theology is the conception of Godhead. In regard to this, the teaching of the New Testament differs from that of the Old Testament in some respects. The following are some of the differences:—

(i) The Old Testament teaches unqualified Monotheism; the New Testament is understood to inculcate the triune nature of God.

(ii) The Old Testament view is grossly anthropomorphic; corporeality is as essential in the nature of God as spirituality. The New Testament spiritualises the conception of God.

(iii) The God of the Old Testament is Jehovah or the Lord; the God of the New Testament is our 'Father in Heaven.' The Old Testament stresses Divine Power, the New Testament His Love.

We shall consider the Christian concept of Godhead in these aspects.

Old Testament conception of God.

The God of the Old Testament is the God of the

Hebrews, specially interested in their welfare. He is a tribal or a national God. With this limitation, the Old Testament has rendered a great service to the cause of rational theology by stressing the oneness of God. The main defect in the Old Testament conception of God is its grossly anthropomorphic character. Jehovah is a magnified human potentate. Only two excerpts will suffice to show this.

(i) 'And they (Adam and Eve) heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presense of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden.

And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, where art thou?

And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.' (*Genesis*, 3: 8-10).

(ii) 'And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying,

For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast;

And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt.' (*Exodus*, 12: 1, 12-3).

The second excerpt also shows how indiscriminating and ruthless Jehovah could be when in passion. This feature in his character he had already exhibited when, in the great Deluge, he destroyed all men, women and children, guilty and innocent alike, with the exception of Noah and his family.

Here two necessary implications of corporeality clearly come out—God's lack of omnipresence and of omniscience. He walks in the garden and has to employ the ordinary human device to find out where Adam and Eve were. He passes through the land of Egypt, and directs Moses to use blood as a token to indicate the houses which he occupied, to enable God to identify the houses and to spare the inmates from the plague that was to destroy all.

The New Testament conception of God.

We pass from the Old Testament theology to the New Testament theology with a sense of relief, but this is not unmingled with a good deal of confusion and perplexity. According to *Genesis*, God made man in his own image. The Hebrew prophets interpreted this in severe literalness, and, reversing the process, made God in man's image. Jesus represented God as a Spirit. Probably, he himself believed in unqualified monotheism, but the conception of Godhead that has gained credence among Christians is something different. It is a belief in a

trinity constituting Godhead. There may be a difference of *status* among the members of the trinity, but each member is regarded as indispensable and co-eternal with others. This is the generally accepted Christian view to-day, but is it unmistakably enunciated in the gospels?

We may get some light on the point from the account of the baptism of Jesus by John the baptist, as given by the evangelists. 'And Jesus, when he was baptised, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him:

And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' (Mathew, 3: 16-17).

The accounts given in Mark and Luke are substantially the same as that in Mathew.

In all the three accounts, we have Jesus, then in a human form and thirty years of age, the Holy Spirit appearing in the form of a dove, *descending* from the heavens, for the occasion, and a voice, announcing Jesus to be His beloved Son. Here we have three distinct entities—Jesus, God and the Holy Ghost. The position of the Holy Ghost is left undetermined, but that of Jesus and God, in their mutual relationship, is indicated fairly clearly. The Son originates from the father, and at any rate starts in an inferior position, as compared with the father. Some sons, whatever be their personal achieve-

ments, continue to regard themselves in this position, relatively to their father. There are good grounds for supposing that Jesus regarded himself thus. When asked about the time when the last curtain on the mundane drama would drop, he said that no man knew about it, he did not know about it; only God knew it. John's gospel was written several decades after the three synoptic gospels. Possibly the question of the position of Jesus in relation to God and the Holy Spirit had begun to agitate the minds of some Christians of a speculative turn of mind. John certainly wanted to elucidate the point. Unlike the synoptics, John's gospel begins with a metaphysical statement regarding the position of Jesus. Sonship normally implies that the son is separate from and posterior to the father. John was anxious to convey that this was not so in the case of Jesus. Jesus (referred to as the Word) was coeternal with God and one with God. Creation itself was the work of Jesus, either on behalf of God or along with God. The position of the Holy Ghost is the most obscure point in the doctrine of trinity. Is it merely God regarded in a particular aspect, as a purificatory influence, or is it a distinct 'person'? In the latter case, what is its status in relation to God and to Jesus? According to the view generally accepted by Christians, there are in the Godhead three persons, one in substance, co-eternal, equal in power—the Father, Son, and the Holy Ghost. As soon as this definition, itself accepted after

severe and protracted conflict, proceeds a step further, serious differences arise. The Eastern (Greek) church holds that the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father, the Western (Roman) church holds that it proceeds from the Father and the Son. The word 'Trinity' does not occur in the scripture, nor is the word 'persons' applied there to the Trinity, but the conception of personality seems to be implied in the Epistles. The three Persons—Father, Son, and the Holy Ghost—are also one Person. This is an unintelligible position. I can break a bar of iron into two or three smaller bars, and can also beat two or three bars into one, bigger bar. Here I am dealing with *quantities*. When I deal with *persons*, I am not dealing with mere quantities. One Person cannot be divided into a number of *smaller* persons, nor can several persons be beaten into a *bigger* personality. The terms 'smaller' and 'bigger,' as applied to persons, have no significance whatsoever. The category of quantity is inapplicable to persons. Two persons are just two persons—they cannot be converted into one person or into three persons. As William James put it, absolute pluralism is the law in the realm of the Spirits.

The divinity of Jesus is central in Christian belief. What does it really mean?

The goal in religious endeavour is *communion with* God; according to some, *union* with God. The union may be merely emotional, as between a pair of lovers, or abso-

lute cessation of one of them by absorption into the other. Religious consciousness regards God as a self-conscious person. Some philosophers look upon God as an Ideal, the farthest reach of human aspiration. In either case, what is known as 'union' is the result of a process of development. Man *becomes* what he was not; he ascends to an exalted position. Belief in the divinity of Jesus rules out this process of Jesus *becoming* divine. In his case, the union was effected in the reverse manner. God *became* man. It was a process of *descent*, not of *ascent*. Jesus is God-man, not man-God. Whereas generally religion seeks to pull man up, here God himself is pulled down.

What is the evidence on which the divinity of Jesus is based? The evidence is mainly threefold:—

(a) His birth of a virgin.

(b) The miracles he performed during the period of his ministry.

(c) His resurrection and ascent to heaven in bodily form.

About the virgin-birth, two of the four gospels are quite silent. It is significant that these are the earliest (Mark) and the latest (John). Is it permissible to guess that the witness of the two intermediate gospels (Matthew and Luke) introduced this conception, just to buttress the divinity of Jesus? and that John, writing some decades later, found or thought that the innovation was not help-

ful? Some modern writers have urged that the question of a virgin-birth is not a question for philosophy or theology, but one for biology. And no biologist is prepared to accept that a child can be born except as a result of the union of an ovum and a sperm, contributed by a woman and a man respectively. According to these persons, the question to be decided is not whether a certain event alleged to have happened is a historical fact, but whether such a flagrant defiance of established law of Nature is possible at all.

About miracles of Jesus too, a similar line of thought may be pursued. What is a miracle? It is a temporary abrogation or cancellation of a law of nature, by supernatural intervention, for a moral purpose or the glorification of God. Obviously, if the laws of Nature are divine enactments and their abrogation is also a divine act or an act performed under His authority, the question of glorification does not arise. When I withdraw an order that I myself issued, and in both cases had the authority to act as I did, the second act does not show me more potent than the first does. The question of glory comes in only if the law abrogated had proceeded from some other source. The moral purpose served by a miracle is merely a figment of credulity. So far as *demonstration* of the miracles described in the gospels is concerned, the evidence produced is quite insufficient to satisfy a man who has an open mind.

The greatest miracle probably was the resurrection of Jesus, and, later, his ascension to heaven in bodily form. This was the conviction of Paul: 'If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain.' We should distinguish between resurrection and ascension as two distinct events, separated by the lapse of a number of days. All the gospels agree on the point of resurrection; as to ascension, Mark and Luke make specific mention of it; Mathew does not refer to it, and in John too there is no explicit reference. We may ignore the difference, take both together, and consider them from the view-points of the degree of probability and of historic fact. The generally accepted Christian view is that all men will one day rise from the dead and go up presumably in bodily form, for receiving divine judgment. The peculiarity about the case of Jesus is that he has not had to wait here on the earth, and that he, himself being God, is not to be judged. On general grounds, the probability of such an event having happened about two thousand years ago, never before and never since, is almost nil. The evidence produced in support of it does not convince a man with an open mind.

(c) *Rational Psychology.*

The nature, origin and destiny of the finite Spirit present baffling problems. The authoritative Christian view on these points is not quite clear. Adam was made of the dust of the ground like other creatures, but, in con-

sequence of God breathing in his nostrils the breath of life, he 'became a soul.' The other creatures, beasts and fowl, were not favoured with this breath of life. Eve, being formed of a rib from the body of Adam, presumably participated in his entire nature and so was also a soul. But what about the children of Adam and Eve? Are we merely a prolongation of the life of Adam and Eve, or are we distinct Spirits? According to the Bible, God did never again breathe into any nostril the breath of life. If I have no spiritual substance of my own, as distinct from Adam's, what becomes of my freedom and of my moral responsibility? Freedom and responsibility seem to presuppose spiritual pluralism. The teaching of the Bible appears to be opposed to such pluralism. We are not here concerned with mere verbal quibbling: we are dealing with what most vitally concerns our life and our destiny. Adam and Eve sinned by disobeying a clear command of God. They were punished for the transgression and were turned out of the garden of Eden. As we derive our *entire* being from them, we inherit their sin too, and are all *born in sin*. And the sin is so great that, even if we were free and capable of making an effort, we cannot emancipate ourselves from the taint. This is very hard on us and unjust too. Each one of us is justified in crying out with the poet—

'Father of mercies, why from silent earth.

Thou raisedst me and cursed me into birth?'

We are here without our consent, which many would have refused to give, if they knew what was in store for them. This terrible doctrine of Original Sin runs counter to the teachings of Psychology, outrages our moral sense and gives a rude shock to our conception of a just God. We are born neither sinners nor saints, but with impulses which are just the raw material for virtue or vice. A just God should give us a fair chance and not start us as sinners. But God is Love. He finds a way out of the difficulty. As we *cannot*, by our own effort, get rid of our original taint, He provides for a vicarious atonement of the sin. This arrangement, beneficent as it may be, also does violence to our sense of Divine Justice and our faith in our freedom. The whole account fails to give a satisfactory explanation of the meaning and purpose of human life.

One more point deserves some consideration. Human life began with Adam. Adam and Eve and all their children have one life each in which they can act well or ill. Their lives have a beginning, but are not to have an end. For this single life, ranging between a moment and, say, two hundred years, they are to enjoy bliss or suffer horrible torments for all eternity! Could lack of a sense of proportion between deeds and their recompense go further than this? The entire situation staggers human reason.

(d) *Christian Ethics.*

The Ethics of the Old Testament is, in its essence, expressed in the Ten Commandments to Moses: The first four commands relate to religious practice, the fifth to domestic life, the remaining five to social relationships. The guidance given is clear and good as far as it goes, but it does not go far enough, and leaves many sections of life untouched. In regard to domestic life, for instance, the commandment is—'Honour thy father and thy mother.' This is good, but a man does not ever remain a son; he also becomes a husband and a father, and, in these capacities too, needs guidance. In the last two commandments, bearing false witness and covetousness are forbidden, but against one's neighbour only. Many nations, the Hebrews among them, have adopted a double code of Ethics—one for those within a circle and another for all outside it. Again, emphasis is laid on the overt act rather than on the underlying motive. As we have already noted, Jesus amended the Old Testament morality both in *extent* and *intent*. The New Testament morality is a great advance on the Old Testament morality, and is now the main buttress of the Christian doctrine. The hold of Christian theology on the western mind has been steadily weakening, but the code of morals preached by Jesus and the life of Jesus still exercise a very wide-spread and deep influence on the lives of millions. Christian ethics has been one of the potent factors that have

moulded the life and general outlook of western people. It must be remarked, however, that this code of conduct impresses men more as an inspiring ideal than as a workable code of conduct. Its basic principle in social ethics is charity and meekness of the spirit. In actual practice, not charity and meekness of the spirit, but arrogance and exploitation have been the main features of the treatment meted by the dominant Christians to the suppressed non-Christians. This discrepancy between professed faith and actual practice has placed Christianity in an awkward position, and many have begun to doubt whether men are perverse, or the code of conduct advocated is an impracticable ideal. An English writer has expressed his attitude thus—'We don't refute the code; it is enough to ignore it.'

5. CHRISTIANITY AND MODERN SCIENCE

The business of science is to answer three questions—What, How and Why. It concerns itself with the phenomenal world. It observes phenomena, arranges or classifies them, and attempts to explain them. Explanation in science means systematisation, showing a number of phenomena as a coherent body of facts. The various items in this coherent body support each other, and in the last resort stand or fall all together. Religion is concerned with eternal verities, and in its practical aspect claims to provide positive reliable guidance for the conduct of life. Thus the spheres in which Religion and

Science work are distinct, but life is not cut into segments. The most outstanding fact about modern times is the remarkable advance of the different branches of physical science. Every department of life has felt the impact of science, and probably religious conceptions more than any others. Among the present-day scientists, there are quite a good number who are frankly irreligious; there are others who still believe that there is meaning and purpose behind the world. They have abjured materialism of their predecessors, but have also lost faith in orthodox Christianity. It is this class of men that causes grave concern to Christian theologians in the west today. Without making any attempt to assess the value of their position, it may be worthwhile to state the position in the words of a man of science who throughout maintains a sober frame of mind. The excerpts given below are from F. W. Westaway's *Science and Theology* (Blackie & Son). They relate only to three selected points—(i) Miracles, (ii) The Virgin Birth and the Incarnation, and (iii) The Resurrection.

(a) *Miracles*

"Although it would be rash to deny that God could intervene directly in the material world, the tendency of modern science is to confirm the belief in the uniformity of nature, a fact which raises a strong presumption against the accuracy of each record of a supposed miracle. As-

suming that God set in motion certain primal forces to work harmoniously in accordance with certain laws, it is taken for granted that He allows those forces to act without any incidental interference on His part. Certainly the evidence for a miracle must be very much stronger than what we require in the case of an ordinary event.'

Of the miracles alleged to have been performed by Jesus, 'those concerned with the healing of nervous disorders are now easily explained on natural grounds; those involving a supernatural control over matter probably had their origin in parable or are legendary; those in which the dead are reported to have been restored to life rest on evidence too slight to carry conviction.' (pp. 368, 369).

(b) *The Virgin Birth and the Incarnation.*

"The evidence for the Virgin Birth is altogether inadequate, and it must be remembered that similar stories were told in regard to many other great personalities of the ancient world, Plato, Alexander, and Augustus amongst them And when the question of the conception itself is considered biologically—and on this point only biologists are competent to express an opinion: the opinions of philosophers and theologians unversed in practical embryology can carry no weight at all—the difficulties are so insuperable that the whole event seems to be in the highest degree improbable. Further the nar-

ratives in St. Mathew and St. Luke include genealogies which have no meaning unless Joseph was the natural father of Jesus. And why did St. Paul and the forth evangelist omit all reference to the story, unless it was because they were sceptical of its truth?" (pp. 370, 371).

(c) *The Resurrection.*

"During the last thirty or forty years there has been a widespread revolt against the western and mediaeval view of the resurrection. Leading scholars are now in accord that the real meaning is the survival of the personality; that 'in the life of the world to come,' not only will the identity of the man, whom in this world the flesh has embodied, be preserved, but the experiences in the flesh will be remembered and will abide with him for ever.

If the dead body of Jesus was actually resuscitated and 'ascended into heaven,' we have to think of the translation of a living man, for an unknown, indefinite distance, through space. What of the laws of gravity? What of the time taken in the translation? What of the difficulties attending the conception of a material heaven? Assuredly the story of the translation of a resuscitated dead body is beyond the limits of probability . . . 'Flesh and Blood,' wrote St. Paul, 'cannot enter the kingdom of God.' And what he wrote in general must have been intended also to apply to the resurrection of our Lord." (pp. 381, 382).

6. THE GROWTH OF THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE

In the review of the Christian Doctrine given in a preceding section, reliance has been placed on the text of the four gospels, and attention drawn to some difficulties that occur to an ordinary reader of some education. It is obvious, however, that a religious doctrine, like an organism, grows, and, in the process, undergoes a change, inasmuch as new elements are absorbed and some of the old elements are discarded. The history of the Christian Church offers a very interesting record of such changes. In the earlier stages, the main difference was between the positions taken up by the Eastern or Greek Church and the Western or Roman Church. This difference was largely inspired by political considerations. The question was—which of the main seats should be the official Head-Quarters of the Church? Rome, as the capital of the Roman Empire, finally won, and Roman Catholicism became the recognised orthodox Creed. Its position was challenged by the Reformation, which was originally a protest against some malpractices that had crept into the Church, notably against the sale of Indulgences in the name of the Pope. The protestant movement which started in Germany spread to other lands, and now the main cleavage in the Christian Church is the opposition between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. In the course of the centuries, many sects arose, flourished, in some cases for centuries, and disappeared. Now they

mainly possess a historical interest. For the student of Theology, these sects possess a special significance. They show how difficulties of interpretation led to schisms and how certain points in the commonly received doctrine embarrassed some enquirers. We have reviewed the Christian doctrine from the points of view of creation, the nature of God, and the status of Jesus. We have also paid attention to the ethical doctrine taught in the Christian scriptures. Precisely this was done by the followers of the new faith down the centuries. The history of the Church and its sects is really a continual review of the Christian doctrine by Christians themselves. People who professed Christianity and yet dissented from some of the dogmas accepted by the *established* Church were referred to as heretics, and, as we could well expect, often two sects flung the epithet into each other's face. Before turning to the points that divide the Church now, we may briefly refer to some of the sects now defunct.

We may begin with the sect founded by the Persian Manichæus or Mani. He was greatly worried by the presence of Evil in the World—creation of a good God, as the orthodox Christians believed. Mani offered a dualistic interpretation of the World after the analogy of the doctrine of Zoroaster, and probably under its influence. He assumed two principles, independent of each other—the principles of Good and Evil, God and the Devil. From both of them proceeded congenial creatures.

There was a fierce struggle between the two Principles which resulted in the defeat of the Devil. Thus discomfited, the Prince of Darkness produced the first parents of the human race. They had a corrupt body, but two souls—a depraved one and the spark of a good one. To free the latter from its bondage, God created Christ and the Holy Ghost from His own substance. Christ was not man; all that the New Testament relates of his humanity, his sufferings and his death on the cross were mere appearances.

A variation of this view appeared several centuries later in Thrace and Bulgaria. The sect was known as Bogomili or Bogomiles. They believed that God had two sons—Satanael and Jesus. The former rebelled and created the material world and Man. God gave a soul to Man, but he was kept under the control of Satanael till the advent of Christ. The law given to Moses was given by Satanael and not by God. Both the Manichaeans and the Bogomili are at one in exempting God from the responsibility for creating man. This is how they tried to escape from the difficulties inherent in the doctrine of Original Sin.

The personality of Jesus and the virginity of Mary were the subject of acute differences. Nestorius, the patriarch of Constantinople (5th century A.D.), held that there were two distinct persons in Jesus Christ, the divine and the human, and Mary, though she was the

mother of Jesus, was not the mother of God. The Tritheists believed that the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost were not three 'persons' in one single Godhead, but three distinct Gods.

The Christian Church now is mainly divided between the Roman Catholics and the Protestants. The main articles of faith accepted by the former are the following:—

- (1) Belief in God, Jesus and the Holy Ghost.
- (2) Belief in the Roman Church as the sole authoritative interpreter of the scriptures.
- (3) Belief in sacraments and ceremonies.
- (4) Belief in the obligation of showing due honour and veneration to the images of Jesus, Mary and the Saints.
- (5) Belief in the efficacy of Indulgences.
- (6) Belief in the supreme authority and the infallibility of the Pope of Rome.

The Pope may add to the dogmas of the church from time to time. Only recently he ordained that henceforward all Catholics will believe that Mary was taken up to heaven in body.

A challenge to this ideology came from a German monk, Martin Luther. He was shocked at the way the Indulgences were being dispensed with in Germany. Originally he was opposed to the *abuse* of the performance, but later came to the conclusion that the whole idea of

selling forgiveness was untenable. Economic and political considerations also played a part. Luther and his associates were opposed to large sums of money, sale-proceeds of the Indulgences, flowing out of Germany. The Pope had acquired considerable secular authority and this wounded the political susceptibilities of many Germans. From the purely religious point of view, the reformers or protestants, as they came to be known, refused allegiance to the Pope and the church tradition, denounced worship of the images of Jesus, Mary and the saints; and relied mainly on the text of the New Testament, as understood by the individual after due reflection.

CHAPTER II

ISLAM*

1. THE BACKGROUND

In Christian countries, Islam is known as Moham-madanism and is sometimes referred to as Mohammadism. The followers of Islam themselves do not relish these names. They prefer to refer to their religion as Islam, which literally means 'surrender to God.' If this attitude is a change that has come over in comparatively recent times, it is a welcome change. It is recognition of the principle that Religion fundamentally is a relation between man and God, and man's allegiance to God must be undivided.

Islam was founded in Arabia, in the seventh century of the Christian era, by Mohammad, commonly referred to as the Prophet of Islam or Prophet of Arabia. A religious faith is a living thing. Its growth and character cannot be properly appreciated apart from an appreciation of the environment in which it had its birth and grew.

* The English rendering of passages quoted from the Koran is that of J. M. Rodwell (Everyman's Library). The writer has also consulted some other translations of the Koran.

Islam bears an unmistakable impress of the environment in which it developed. Had it been founded in a country other than Arabia, at a time sufficiently removed from the seventh century, and by some one other than Mohammad, it would have been a faith considerably different from the Islam that we have. Let us turn for a little while to Arabia, to the cultural, social and political conditions in Arabia in the seventh century, and to the character of Mohammad, as it developed in consequence of the interplay of the forces of Heredity and Circumstance.

Arabia is a peninsula in the south-west of Asia. The surface features are mountains on the western and southern coasts, enclosing a large plateau. Between the mountains and the sea are fertile strips, but the greater part of the peninsula is taken up by deserts and steppes. There are no rivers in the country; but during the rainy season, some streams bring water to the thirsty land. In the centre there are some good oases. These and the fertile coastal plains provide the only support for settled communities. The urban population has generally to depend upon imported necessities of life. Their main occupation is trade, which brings them into contact with other people inside the country and even beyond its frontiers. The majority of the people live outside these towns and many of them have to be on the move. They shift from place to place during different parts of the year, just as the means of subsistence require them to do. Quite

naturally, they cannot have settled habitations. Many of them also practice depredation whenever it is possible. In consequence, they are a hardy and intrepid people. They develop all the characteristics that a 'civilization of the Desert' is expected to foster.

Arabia consists of a number of principalities and emirates. Two of them—Yaman and Hejaz—possess special significance. Yaman is fertile and rich and has a good climate. It is, as probably its name signifies, 'the land of happiness and plenty.' Hejaz is the holy land of the muslims, because it contains the two famous towns of Mecca and Medina. Mecca, the birth-place of Mohammad and of Islam, is the holiest city for the muslims. Medina, the second holiest city of Islam, had the distinction of affording asylum to Mohammad, when he had to flee Mecca, and was the place where Islam secured its notable triumphs during the life of the Prophet. It also enshrines the remains of Mohammad. It is a much smaller town than Mecca, but, like the latter, it receives a large accession to its population during the hadj season. Mecca is situated in a small plain, about two miles long and about a mile broad, surrounded by hills. It has no springs and has only one well, known as the Zemzem. Its water has great merit in the eyes of muslim pilgrims, but it is not judged to be good enough for daily use by the Meccans.

We turn now to the cultural and social conditions

prevalent in Arabia in the seventh century of the Christian era. The Arabians had enjoyed freedom for centuries, but Arabia was a congeries of independent principalities, not one country under one government. This was a very material point for Mohammad, for the principalities were often ranged against one another, and none of them singly was strong enough to resist him, when he had gathered round him a sufficiently large band of fiery and devoted followers.

Not only was Arabia a congeries of independent principalities, its population too was heterogeneous. One consequence of this was a diversity of faiths professed by the people. They were tolerant of the religious beliefs of their neighbours. Religious fanaticism seems to have been rare before the time of Mohammad.

The vast majority of the Arabs were the Sabians, but there were also considerable numbers of Jews and Christians and some Persian wise-men or Magi. The Jews had infiltrated into Arabia to seek an asylum from their persecutors, and also to find an outlet for their exceptional business capacity. Some of the Christians were immigrants, but quite a large number were Arab converts. The Persians were there, as the intercourse between Arabia and Persia was rather close. These classes had their own beliefs, and, quite naturally, when Mohammad founded Islam, he employed the process of selection and rejection in regard to all of them. The faith of the Sabians was

a strange mixture of Monotheism and Idol-worship. They believed in one God, but they also believed in an indefinite number of subordinate divinities. These latter were regarded as the *daughters* of God and were arranged in a hierarchy. The Sabians had no image of God and it is not clear how exactly they worshipped him; but they had the images of their goddesses, whom they also regarded as stars. The Idols differed from one another in importance and the most important were placed in the temple of Mecca and round about it. The temple of Mecca was a place of pilgrimage for the Sabians. The Jews and the Christians were believers in the Books or *abl-i-kitab*. Mohammad, as we shall see later, was very bitter against the Sabian idol-worship; his grievance against the Jews and the Christians was that they had corrupted the text of the scriptures and thus distorted Truth. The Persian Magi excelled in astrology, sorcery and magical practices. In the Koran, as we shall see in a subsequent section, there are numerous references to these cults. The Arabs also believed in witchcraft and sundry other superstitions. Besides angels and stars which were objects of veneration besides *Allah Taala*, the one supreme God, they also believed in the existence and malignant influence of Evil Spirits. These last comprised devils and the *genii*, possibly derived from India and Persia respectively. Mohammad made belief in the existence of Allah Taala as the corner-stone of the new Faith, but

completely rejected the idea of subordinate deities. He retained the current belief in the existence of angels, devils and the genii as a necessary element in muslim dogmatics or *Iman*.

We may now pass on to consider the personality of the founder of Islam. This naturally had a very profound effect in determining the character of the new religion.

2. THE LIFE OF MOHAMMAD

Mohammad was born at Mecca in 670 or 671 A.D. His parents, Abdullah and Amina, both belonged to the influential tribe of the Koreish, though they were not possessed of much wealth or power. Many poets have sung of the uses of Adversity. Mohammad had to encounter a lot of difficulties in his early life, but he did successfully overcome them. Shortly after his birth, his father passed away, leaving behind him but five camels and a faithful female slave. During his early childhood, he suffered from fits which continued to afflict him in later life and were confounded with the visits of the angel Gabriel. When he was six years old, he lost his mother too and passed on to the care of his grandfather, Abdul Mutalib. Not long after, Abdul Mutalib too died and left the young Mohammad to the care of his eldest son Abu Taleb, who was brother to Abdullah by the same mother. Abu Taleb was a merchant and destined

Mohammad for the same employment. When Mohammad grew up, he accompanied his uncle and some other relatives on commercial business. During these years, a very lucky circumstance proved the turning-point in the life of Muhammad. Abu Taleb recommended him to a rich widow, Khadijah, who owned extensive commercial business. Khadija employed Mohammad as an agent, and was so thoroughly satisfied with his work that she married him. Mohammad was then twenty-five and Khadija forty. This marriage put Mohammad in affluent circumstances and set him rather free for activity in a wider sphere.

He was essentially a man of religious disposition and used to spend a part of the sacred month of Ramazan in a cave near Mecca for meditation. Years sped and probably he experienced 'obstinate questionings' in his soul, but much is not known about his spiritual development.

When he was forty years of age, a change of tremendous significance occurred in his life. He felt convinced that he was entrusted with a high mission. He told Khadijah that he had had an interview with the angel Gabriel, who had announced that he (Mohammad) was apostle of God and Gabriel was commissioned to reveal to him from time to time the will of God. Khadija believed him and was the first convert to Islam.

Mohammad cautiously announced to a select few the news of his being chosen an apostle of God. The

second convert to Islam was Khadija's cousin or uncle, Waraka. This, obtained through the instrumentality of Khadija, was a great gain. It is assumed that he was a Christian, and Mohammad's intimate knowledge of the Old and the New Testament, of which there is abundant evidence in the Koran, was derived from him. The next converts were Mohammad's slave Zeid, who received his freedom on the occasion; Ali, the son of Abu Taleb; and Abu Bekr, whose credit at Mecca stood very high. Abu Bekr's example was followed by ten of the most considerable citizens of Mecca. Islam had a very good start. Mohammad instructed his followers in the doctrines of Islam, as they were gradually revealed to him by the angel Gabriel.

Thus passed three years in the quiet dissemination of the new doctrine. In the fourth year of the Mission, Mohammad decided to do his work publicly. He invited the members of his tribe to an entertainment, and there formally announced his prophetic mission. He then asked whether any one in the assembly was prepared to become his chief lieutenant. The acceptance of the post involved considerable risk. For sometime all were silent, and then the youthful Ali came forward and declared that he would be with Mohammad through thick and thin; and all those that opposed his master would have to reckon with him too. This upset Abu Taleb who endeavoured to dissuade his son from the hazardous resolve, but Ali

was adamant. The conference initiated the second stage in Mohammad's propagation of Islam.

The second phase of the propagation of Islam covers about nine years. In the early part of this period, persuasion was the instrument of propaganda; in the later part, the element of aggressiveness dominated. The idolators were the main object of attack. Quite naturally, there was much of bitterness on both sides. Mohammad was sometimes disheartened, but he often had the satisfaction of converting his bitterest enemies. When he was very dejected, Gabriel appeared to him with some divine revelation. This revelation was a source of great strength, for it generally emphasized two points—first, that it was Mohammad's job to do his duty; it was for God to suitably deal with those who did not listen to the new message; secondly, Mohammad was not alone in receiving the treatment he was receiving; other prophets before him had had similar experience. Many of the pilgrims who visited the Kaaba were influenced by his teaching and embraced Islam. In the tenth year of his prophetic mission, Mohammad suffered heavily in the death of Abu Taleb and Khadijah. In the twelfth year of the ministry, Islam was accepted by some important residents of Medina. This was destined to be an event of great significance in the life of Mohammad. At Mecca, the position became very critical. Mohammad received information that his enemies were conspiring to murder him. Ac-

accompanied by the trusty Abu Bekr alone, he slipped away unobserved. They had to spend three days in concealment in a cave before they could proceed to Medina, where they were warmly received. When the news of the *flight* or *hijrat* became known, a number of his devoted followers also went to Medina and settled there. This happened in A.D. 622, the starting point of the Muslim era. Mohammad was then 52 years of age. The flight to Medina marks the beginning of the third and the last phase of Mohammads' ministry.

This phase is marked by the use of violence. Fire and sword became the main instruments of propaganda. He assumed sacerdotal and regal dignity. Gabriel brought down from heaven instructions as to how the booty captured from the unbelievers was to be divided. One-fifth of the entire booty was to be paid in the public treasury. Besides, all muslims were enjoined to pay a certain impost known as *Zakat*. This became more important than mere alms-giving, which had been commended so much before. Securely settled at Medina, Mohammad built a temple and a residential house for himself, and then turned his thoughts to the Koreish. The battle of Bedra greatly enhanced his power and prestige. There were also several expeditions organised against the Jews and some native tribes. In the sixth year of the flight, Mohammad, with a large number of followers, left Medina for a visit to the temple of Mecca. It looked as if both sides were

ready for an appeal to arms, but a compromise was arrived at, on the basis that the tribes be left free to join Mohammad or the Koreish, as they chose. Two years later, Mohammad attacked Mecca and took it. Other expeditions followed and established his supremacy in Arabia and even beyond its borders. He had the supreme satisfaction that in his lifetime idolatry was practically rooted out, and Islam was the established religion of the country. This was really a marvellous achievement.

In the Medina part of Mohammad's ministry, Religion and Politics were indissolubly blended. If we consider them separately, it is not easy to determine which of them was primary. Did he believe that the establishment of an empire would be the best means of propagating Islam, or that the best guarantee of the solidarity of the secular power would be the unity of Faith professed by the people?

Reference may also be made here to an important change in the private life of Mohammad that took place after the flight. Polygamy was prevalent in Arabia, but, for obvious reasons, during her lifetime, Khadija was the only wife of Mohammad. At Medina, Mohammad married Abu Bekr's daughter, Ayesha, and later several other women. Special mention may be made of Zeinab, the wife of Zaid, whom he had given freedom on the occasion of his conversion, and later adopted as a son. This seems to have annoyed some of his followers, because, in regard

to the taboo against marrying a daughter-in-law, custom made no difference between a natural son and an adopted son. The matter was settled by a revelation from God on the subject. Sura 33 has the following—

‘And when Zaid had settled concerning her to divorce her, we married her to thee, that it might not be a crime in the faithful to marry the wives of their adopted sons, when they have settled the affair concerning them. And the behest of God is to be performed.

No blame attaches to the prophet where God hath given him a permission.’ (Verses 37-38).

Mohammad passed away at Medina in the year 632 A.D. He was then 61 years of age.

3. THE KORAN

The Koran, also called *al kitab*, the Book, is the religious scripture of the muslims. It is divided into 114 chapters of very unequal length. The last 21 chapters, with the exception of two (96 and 100), consist of ten or fewer verses. Of the earlier chapters, the first consists of 7 verses, chapters 2, 3, 7 and 26 consist of 200 or more verses, 14 chapters consist of more than 100 verses: with a solitary exception, the longer chapters are all among the first 26 chapters. Thus generally the longer chapters are earlier, and the shortest chapters the last portion of the book. The verses themselves are of unequal length. All chapters except the ninth begin with the words—‘In the

name of God, the compassionate, the merciful.' Why this auspiciatory form is not prefixed to the 9th chapter is a point on which the muslim scholars are not agreed. It is held by some that this chapter was the last chapter to be revealed, and Mohammad somehow did not issue any instructions about prefixing the words. Others suppose that it is not a distinct chapter, but a continuation of chapter 8.

All chapters have Titles assigned to them. They are supposed to refer to some prominent topic considered in the chapter concerned. However, we cannot take them all to signify the subject-matter of the chapters in the ordinary sense. The four longest chapters are entitled The Cow, The Poets, Al Araf, The Family of Imran. The chapter 'The Cow' is not a chapter on the cow; it begins with telling us that the Koran is a guidance to the God-fearing, who believe in the unseen, observe prayer and practise alms-giving. Then we are told that the infidels will not believe whether Mohammad warns them or not, because 'God has sealed up their hearts and ears.' Reference is made to the cow in describing the characteristics of the animal which was suitable for sacrifice, as detailed by Moses to his people. But the chapter is mainly devoted to other topics. The same can be said about the majority of the chapters in the book.

The titles of the chapters deserve some notice.

God, The Koran and Mohammad one could naturally

expect. Some distinguished men of by-gone times, mainly prophets—Jonas, Hud, Joseph, Abraham, Mary, Lokman, Noah, The Prophets—receive the distinction. Of Mohammad's contemporaries, only two names are mentioned in the Koran—those of Zaid, the twice blessed, and Abu Laheb, the accursed. The latter provides the title and is the exclusive subject of a chapter (111). He was the uncle of Mohammad, and, instigated by his wife, had rejected the claims of his nephew. In the brief chapter of five verses, we are told that Abu Laheb and his wife would both be consigned to the flames of Hell.

The genii, man, men and the humbler species—Cow, Cattle, The Bee, The Spider, The Elephant—are not forgotten. The Ornaments of gold, Smoke, The Star, The Moon, The Sun, The Figs are some other titles. The most enigmatic titles are given to chapters 20, 36, 38 and 50. They are the letters T.H., Y.S., S, and K respectively.

Another notable characteristic of some of the chapters is the letters of the alphabet prefixed to them. Some of these are given below—

H.M.—40, 41, 43, 44, 45, 46.

A.L.R.—10, 11, 12, 14, 15.

A.L.M.—2, 3, 19, 30, 31, 32

H.M.A.S.K.—42.

A.L.M.R.—13.

A.L.M.S.—7.

Nine other chapters have some letters prefixed to

them. What do they mean? The muslim divines themselves are not all agreed on the point. One explanation offered is that they are the initials of the names of persons who lent their manuscripts of parts of the Koran, when, after the death of Mohammad, Abu Bekr, his father-in-law and successor, decided to collect all the available fragments and arrange them in the form of a consolidated text. The manuscripts lent for the purpose were to be returned to the owners. This suggestion has some plausibility. In the chapters marked H.M. we notice a significant omission that breaks the continuity—chapter 42. Similarly in the list marked A.L.R. there is the notable omission of chapter 13. Down below, we find that chapter 42 is marked H.M.A.S.K., and chapter 13, A.L.M.R. Probably, A.L.M.R. are the initials of the ampler name of the individual who signed himself as A.L.R., and H.M.A.S.K. is either a similar amplification or two joint names—H.M. and A.S.K.

As we have said above, Mohammad was forty years of age when he announced to his wife, Khadija, that he was an apostle of God and would receive Divine communications through the angel Gabriel. The revelations came gradually for about 21 years, almost till the end of his life, as God chose or as occasion arose. A part of the *ayats* was revealed at Mecca and the rest at Medina. The Koran, as we have it now, is not chronologically arranged. It is, therefore, rather difficult to determine the precise

order in which the revelations came. In the majority of cases, scholars are able to determine the order from interval evidence. Take for an instance the following passages that occur in chapter 33.

'O Prophet! say to thy wives, If ye desire this present life and its braveries, come, then. I will provide for you, and dismiss you with an honourable dismissal.

But if ye desire God and His Apostle, and a home in the next life, then, truly, hath God prepared for those of you who are virtuous, a great reward.'

'O Prophet! we allow thee thy wives whom thou hast dowered, and the slaves whom thy right hand possesseth out of the booty which God hath granted thee'

These *ayats* could not have been revealed before the flight to Medina, and before the death of Khadija. Scholars have attempted to divide the *ayats* into three classes:—

(i) Those revealed at Mecca, when Mohammad's ideas were still taking shape and he communicated his message in a tolerant, conciliatory tone,

(ii) Those revealed at Mecca, when he became an aggressive propagandist,

(iii) Those revealed at Medina, when he adopted the use of the sword as an instrument of propaganda.

4. THE TEACHINGS OF ISLAM

A good deal of the Koran is taken up with ancient

History and based on the narratives given in the Old Testament. The generally accepted view is that Moham-mad's knowledge of these events was derived from some Christians and Jews, and that no Arabic translation of the Bible was then available. A part of the revelation refers to contemporary happenings which throw a flood of light on the life and doings of the Prophet. Another part which has special significance for our present purpose relates to the teaching of Islam in regard to Religion and Morality. To this we now turn our attention.

(a) *Cosmology.*

In cosmology, the point of view of Islam is definitely that of Creationism.

'He it is who created for you all that is on Earth, then proceeded to the Heaven, and into seven Heavens did He fashion it.' (2: 27). Chapter 41 tells us that the making of the Earth, the placing of the firm mountains upon it and the distribution of food throughout it occupied God for four days. 'Then He applied Himself to the Heaven, which then was but smoke,' and 'He made them seven heavens in two days and in each heaven made known its office.' (41: 9-10).

This is confirmed in Chapter 50, but with a significant addition: 'We created the heavens and the earth and all that is between them in six days, and no weariness touched us.' (50: 37). The Koran does not accept the

Old Testament view that God had to rest on the seventh day after the exhausting work of Creation for six days. The sequence in the creation of the earth and the heavens seems to be denied in chapter 21, where we are told that 'the heavens and the earth were both a solid mass' and God 'clave them asunder.' (21: 31). In the next verse, we have the following:—

'And we set mountains on the earth lest it should more with them.'

What are the contents of God's creation?

We know something about men, beasts and birds, and all that is on the earth. But what about the beings, if any, that are in the heavens? Two classes receive prominent mentions in the Koran—the Angels and the Djinn.

Like all else, the angels too are created and mortal. On the resurrection day, 'there shall be a blast on the trumpet, and all who are in the Heavens and all who are in the Earth shall expire, save those whom God shall vouchsafe to save.' If some angels survive the blast on the trumpet, it will not be on account of their nature, but the grace of God. Mohammad vehemently denied the idolatrous Arabs' contention that angels were all daughters of God and so of female sex. One of the main functions of the angels is that they aid believers and implore forgiveness for them. Some are deputed to record the doings of men and will report the same to God on the Judgment day. We are also told that guardian angels watch over

men. When death overtakes any one of them, the 'messengers take his soul, and fail not.' Some guard Hell and some others bear the throne of God and encircle it. The main job of the angels is to sing the praises of God.

The position about the Djinn is not quite clear. They are regarded as the progeny of Eblis or Satan, and Eblis himself is declared to be one of them. According to the first view, they emerged on the scene later than Adam, for the fall of Eblis began with his refusal to prostrate himself before Adam. According to the second view, they are older than Man. Representing the principle of Evil, they are 'far removed from hearing' the Koran, but some of them did manage to hear it. These last believed in the truth and became muslims. So there are two kinds of the Djinn—good and bad. The good among them would be saved like human believers; the bad, like the human non-believers, will be 'fuel for Hell.'

About the origin of man, the Koran accepts the Jewish view. God 'created man of clay' like that of the potter.' This was a lowly origin compared with that of even the Djinn, who were created 'of pure fire.' This discrimination was the cause of the Fall of Man with all it implies. God commanded the angels to prostrate themselves before Adam. The angels had a serious misgiving about man's career on the earth, but they obeyed God—all except Eblis, who declared that, being made of pure fire, he could not worship a creature of clay. This

made him accursed, and later man too. Adam was made of clay, but chapter 96, supposed by some to have been the earliest revelation, speaks of man being created from Clots of Blood. Probably here reference is made not to Adam, but to his descendants.

(b) *Theology.*

In Theology, the most remarkable contribution of Islam is the emphasis it laid on the oneness of God. Mohammad's campaign was directed against idol-worship which was so prevalent in Arabia. The Arabs of his time were believers in One God, but with Him they also joined an indefinite number of subordinate divinities of varying ranks, all deemed to be the daughters of God. Mohammad succeeded in converting them to pure Monotheism. He referred to Jesus in terms of reverence, but denied his being the son of God. 'God has no Sons and Daughters.' 'There is no God but God.' Such brief and clear statements express the basic principle of Islam.

This conception was a great advance on the views of the Sabians and the Christians. Islam further conceived God as a Spirit. This was a great advance on the Jewish anthropomorphism. According to Islam, Unity and Spiritual nature are the main metaphysical attributes of God. In regard to the Earth, the Heavens and all that is in them, His position is that of a Creator and an Omnipotent King and Ruler. It is in regard to His ethical

attributes that we encounter some difficulty. When we read the Koran, we find two different, often contradictory, conceptions of Godhead, and are constrained to exclaim—

‘Look at this picture and at that!’ Of the 114 chapters, 113 have prefixed to them the words—‘In the name of God, the compassionate, the merciful.’ This compassion and mercy are reserved for those who ‘believe’; for others, there is eternal torture in the fires of Hell. Now the will of man has something to do in the determination of his beliefs, but it is by no means the sole factor in their determination. Our beliefs are mainly determined for us by objective fact. The position is made more serious when we are told in the Koran that our beliefs on which our post-mundane destiny depends are determined by the arbitrary Will of God. Here are some passages from the Koran—

‘But all sovereignty is in the hands of God. Do then believers doubt that had He pleased, God would certainly have guided all men aright?’ (13: 30).

‘But prepared of old for the infidels was this fraud of theirs; and they are turned aside from the path; and whom God causeth to err, no Guide shall there be for him.’ (13: 33).

‘Verily God misleadeth whom He will, and guideth whom He will. Spend not thy soul in sighs for them.’ (35: 9).

‘Guided indeed is he whom God guideth; but for

him whom He misleadeth, thou shalt by no means find a patron, director.' (18: 16).

There does not seem to be much room here for perversity of the will. But in some places, the Koran refers to men's perversity and their deceitfulness. We are told that in this too God definitely surpasses them. When people use plots or stratagems against a prophet, God also plots or uses stratagems, and '*Allah kbair-ul-makrin*' (*Allah behtar makr karnewala hai*: God is the master plotter or deceiver).

Again and again, we are told that God is an avenger and His vengeance knows no bounds.

Besides belief in one God, whose character is very baffling, the fundamental points of the faith or *Iman* are the following:—

- (1) Belief in the existence of Angels.
- (2) Belief in the existence of the Djinn.
- (3) Belief in Scriptures.
- (4) Belief in the Prophets and Apostles.
- (5) Belief in a general Resurrection, final Judgment, Rewards and Punishments.
- (6) Belief in Pre-destination by God of all events, good and bad.

In some accounts, belief in the existence of genii as a distinct class of beings is dropped, because they are taken to be the progeny of Eblis, a fallen angel. A few words on each of these points may not be out of place.

The substance of the Angels is Light. Among them, four stand pre-eminent: Gabriel, the messenger of God; Michael, the special protector of the Jews; Azrail, the angel of Death; and Israphil, who will sound the trumpet for the general resurrection.

The Djinn were created of fire. They are both good and bad, the former being the fortunate ones who happened to hear the Koran.

Of the Scriptures communicated by God to the prophets from time to time, only the Koran is uncorrupted. Some of the *ayats* were the work of Satan, but God soon disillusioned Mohammad and made the correct revelation. The ordinary prose statement of the fact would be that some verses in the Koran were later abrogated, and such *ayats* were ascribed to the intervention of Satan.

The most important of the prophets are Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Mohammad. Abraham built the Kaaba, 'the first temple that was founded for mankind.' The Koran refers to the place in the Kaaba where Abraham prayed. Jesus is referred to as the son of Mary, but not as the son of God. 'God is only one God! Far be it from His glory that He should have a son!' (4: 169). Mohammad is referred to as 'the seal of the prophets.' A notable point about him is that he performed no miracles. The reason, as God informed him, was that, in the case of the previous prophets, miracles had carried no conviction with the people. 'Say: In sooth I am only a man

like you. It has been revealed to me that your God is one only God.' (18: 110).

When the curtain will finally drop on the stage of creation, all creatures will arise again from their graves to be judged for their deeds. Mohammad's contemporaries objected that, in the meantime, the bodies would be completely dissipated. The answer uniformly given was that God who had originally created bodies out of dust was capable of repeating the operation. As to the time when this would happen, Mohammad's attitude was the same as that of Jesus. 'Its period is known only to thy God.' (79: 44).

Both, however, thought that the end was very near.

As to the basis of the final Judgment, two conflicting views are given in the Koran. It vacillates between Deeds and Faith.

'Wealth and children are the adornment of the present life: but good works, which are lasting, are better in the sight of thy Lord as to recompense, and better as to hope.' (18: 44). A different note is struck in 18: 105, where Belief is exalted above Deeds. There are 'those who believe not in the signs of the Lord, or that they shall ever meet Him. Vain, therefore, are their works; and no weight will we allow them on the day of resurrection.'

Belief in Pre-destination is fundamental in Islam. We have already quoted some passages on the point. Only two more may be added here.

'Seest thou not that we send the Satans against the Infidels to urge them into sin?' (19: 86).

'Some among them hearken unto thee: but we have cast veils over their hearts that they should not understand the Koran, and a weight into their ears.' (6: 25).

(c) *Practical part of Religion.*

The practical part of Religion is known as *Din*. It comprises a number of duties, of which four are of special importance. They are Prayer, Alms-giving, Fasts and Pilgrimage.

Alms-giving is commended in Islam as in other religions. When Mohammad decided to propagate the new faith with the help of the sword, he needed large amounts of money for his expeditions, and added to ordinary alms-giving special imposts to be paid by all muslims. The prescription of Fasts was no innovation. 'O believers! a Fast is prescribed to you as it was prescribed to those before you, that you may fear God.' (2: 179). The same can be said about Pilgrimage. 'And the pilgrimage to the temple is a service due to God from those who are able to journey thither.' (3: 91). There was some doubt in regard to the two mountains in the vicinity of Mecca, which were the objects of special veneration to the idolatrous Arabs. The point was settled by making a pilgrimage to them permissive in character.

Prayer is the most fundamental of a man's duties.

No set prayer is prescribed in the Koran, but now muslims have general or daily prayers as well as special prayers. About daily prayers, two points deserve some special notice.

About the *time* of offering prayers, the Koran gives a number of divergent instructions.

(i) 'Verily, on the oncoming of night are devout impressions strongest, and words are most collected;

But in the day time thou hast continual employ.' (73: 6-7).

(ii) 'And think within thine own self on God, with lowliness and with fear and without loud spoken words, at even, and at night.' (76: 25-6).

(iii) 'And celebrate the praise of thy Lord when thou risest up.

And in the night-season: Praise Him when the stars are setting.' (52: 48-9).

And make mention of the name of thy Lord at morn, at even and at night.' (76: 25-6).

(iv) 'And celebrate the praise of thy Lord before the sunrise, and before its setting; and sometime in the night do thou praise him, and in the extremes of the day,* that thou haply mayest please him.' (20: 130).

All muslims now offer prayers with their face turned to Kaaba. In regard to this, Mohammad's views, or God's instructions, underwent a change with the pas-

* Mid-day?

sage of time. It appears that for some time Mohammad and his followers offered their own prayers, but accepted Jerusalem as their *Kebla*. Then there was a breach between the Jews and the muslims, and the latter decided to discard the Jewish *Kebla*. In chapter 2 of the Koran, we have the following:—

‘The foolish ones will say, “What hath turned them from the *Kebla* which they used?” Say: ‘The East and the West are God’s. He guideth whom he will into the right path.’ (2: 136).

A little earlier in the same chapter, we have—

‘The East and the West is God’s; therefore whichever way ye turn, there is the face of God; Truly God is immense and knoweth all.’ (2: 109).

This was a rational attitude, but Mohammad, and probably his followers too, wanted a *Kebla* as a symbol of communal solidarity. So down came the following revelation from God—

‘We have seen thee turning thy face towards every part of Heaven; but we will have thee turn to a *kebla* which shall please thee. Turn then thy face towards the sacred Mosque, and wherever ye be, turn your faces towards that part.’ (2: 139).

(d) *Judgment, Heaven and Hell.*

Among the doctrines of Islam, two stand out pre-eminent—faith in the unity of God and faith in resurrec-

tion and final judgment. The latter is really an assertion about the moral government of the world. A long chapter (7), with 205 verses, is entitled *Al Araf*—the partition-wall between Heaven and Hell, but only four verses in it tell us about the wall. On it, 'shall be men who will know all by their tokens.' They will speak to men in the Paradise as well as to those in Hell, but we are not told whether they themselves will remain where they are for ever, or the wall will function as a purgatory for them.

Arabia was mainly a desert land, devoid of verdure and water. Polygamy was common. The level of culture was rather low. What were the pleasures that awaited those who embraced the new Faith? Chapter 56 gives a good picture—

'Mid gardens and delights shall they dwell who have feared God.'

'On couches ranged in rows shall they recline; and to the damsels with large dark eyes will we wed them.'

'And fruits in abundance will we give them, and flesh as they shall desire:

Therein shall they pass to one another the cup which shall engender no light discourse, no motive to sin:

And youths shall go round among them beautiful as imbedded pearls.' (56: 17, 20, 22-24).

Elsewhere shades and fountains and wine are pro-

minently mentioned. The picture of Paradise given above is believed to have been the one drawn in the earlier period of the ministry. In later revelations, the youth are dropped and the damsels or Houris are the main source of enjoyment. Women among the faithful are mercifully kept out of the Paradise. The revelations believed to have been received last are more sober: women are seldom referred to, and in some places it seems to be suggested that the faithful will go to Paradise accompanied by their wives.

Hell, as commonly conceived, is the place of eternal torment for the damned. But occasionally the word is also used to signify the place of purgation. This two-fold sense of the word is found in early Christian theology and also in the Koran. In sura 19, we have the following—

‘No one is there of you who shall not go down unto it—This is a settled decree with thy Lord—

Then will we deliver those who had the fear of God, and the wicked will we leave in it on their knees.’ (19: 72-3). According to the commonly accepted view, the faithful will pass straight to Paradise, without having to pass through the Hell. The Djinn and the unbelievers will be hurled into the Hell. ‘I will wholly fill hell with Djinn and men.’ (11: 120).

‘And who shall teach thee what Hell-fire is?
It leaveth nought, it spareth nought,
Blackening the skin.

Over it are nineteen angels,
None but angels have we made guardians of the fire.'
(74:27-31).

'Hell truly shall be a place of snares,
The home of transgressors,
To abide therein ages;
No coolness shall they taste therein nor any drink,
Save boiling water and running sores;
Meet recompense.' (78: 21-26).

'Verily, the tree of Ez-Zakkoum,
Shall be the sinner's food;
Like dregs of oil shall it boil up in their bellies,
Like the boiling of scalding water.' (44: 43-46).

'Those who disbelieve our signs we will in the end cast into the fire: so oft as their skins shall be well burnt, we will change them for fresh skins, that they may taste the torment. Verily God is Mighty, Wise.' (4: 59).

How long will the compassionate, merciful God decree the unbelievers to 'taste the torment' for the doings of a single brief life?

'And as for those who shall be consigned to misery—their place the Fire! therein shall they sigh and bemoan them—

Therein shall they abide while the Heavens and the Earth shall last, unless thy Lord shall will it otherwise; verily thy Lord doth what He chooseth.' (11: 108-9).

The tortures are all *pains of sense*, and, strangely

enough, they are mainly concerned with a single instrument of causing such pain—Heat. Is this connected with life lived in the Arabian desert?

5. THE TENETS OF ISLAM REVIEWED

We may now briefly pass in review the fundamental doctrines of Islam. A careful study of the Koran would show that the contemporaries of Mohammad did not worry much about the specific doctrines preached by him: they directed their attack against his claim that the Koran was revealed by God and Mohammad was chosen to be the Apostle for delivering the new message. Their objections and the refutations thereof by God possess considerable historical interest, and we may well begin with them. The main grounds on which contemporary critics relied were two:—

(i) Mohammad was an unlettered Arab and so could not be the author of the Koran.

(ii) The Koran was mainly a recital of old stories, and could not be regarded as a revelation—as a new message communicated by God.

In regard to the first ground, it was held by some that he was 'possessed' and the Koran was really the handiwork of the Djinn or Satan. Others held that Mohammad was assisted in the composition of the Koran by some foreigners who had taken asylum in Arabia.

The objections and the answers are generally brief.

Some of the more prominent of the objections are given below:—

(1) The Koran is a fabrication of Mohammad himself and not a revelation from God. (69: 44-47).

(2) The Koran is nothing but clear sorcery. (37: 14-15).

(3) Mohammad 'is certainly possessed' by a djinn (68: 51-2).

(4) The Koran is not revealed all at once, but in parts.

This enables Mohammad to change his ground as occasion requires. (25: 34).

(5) The Koran is 'nothing but the fables of the ancients.' (6: 25).

The last objection was probably the most serious objection urged by the thoughtful among Mohammad's contemporaries. The idolatrous Arabs referred to the stories borrowed from the Old Testament as 'fables of the ancients.' To the Jews and the Christians, the main difficulty was that a considerable part of the contents of the Koran was already a matter of common knowledge, and so could not be regarded as 'revelation.' The Koran attempted to vindicate its claim in two somewhat different ways. It was maintained that it was a normal procedure with God to send apostles just to *confirm* the messages communicated in earlier times. 'And in the footsteps of the prophets caused we Jesus, the son of Mary, to follow,

confirming the law which was before him' (5: 50). This was not a very strong position. So it was urged that the Truth, as communicated to earlier prophets, had not remained pure and uncorrupted. The Koran was sent down not merely to confirm the old messages, but to present the old teaching in its uncorrupted form.

Leaving the old critics, the contemporaries of Mohammad, alone, we may now consider some difficulties that confront a modern student of the Koran. Before we pass to specific points, we may have a few words on a matter of considerable significance.

Islam a National Religion.

The Koran is a warning meant specifically for a particular people—the Arabs. It is very explicit on the point.

'It is thus moreover that we have revealed to thee an Arabic Koran, that thou mayest warn the mother city* and all around it.' (42: 5).

'An Arabic Koran have we sent it down, that ye might understand it.' (12: 2).

'We have made this Koran easy for thee in thine own tongue, that they may take the warning.' (44: 58).

'If we had sent it down unto any foreigner, And he had recited it to them, they had not believed.' (26: 198-9).

When God refers to His gifts to man, He has obviously the Arabs in His mind.

* Mecca.

'And God hath given you tents to dwell in; and He hath given you the skins of beasts for tents, that ye may find them light when ye shift your quarters, or when ye halt; and from their wool and soft fur and hair, hath he supplied you with furniture and goods for temporary use.

And from the things which He hath created, hath God provided shade for you, and hath given you the mountains for places of shelter, and hath given you garments to defend you from the heat, and garments to defend you in your wars. Thus doth He fill up the measure of His goodness towards you, that you may resign yourselves to Him.' (16: 82-3).

(a) *Cosmology.*

In cosmology, the Koran seems generally to follow the Old Testament. We are told about seven Heavens 'one above another,' the lowest of them 'decked with lights,' placed there to be hurled at the Satans.' The Heavens are also spoken of as solid. Some indication about the size of the earth may be found in the account given of Zul-Karnain (the two-horned):—

'We stablished his power upon the earth, and made for him a way to everything. And a route be followed.

Until when he reached the setting of the sun, he found it to set in a miry fount; and hard by he found a people' . . .

'Then followed he a route,

Until when he reached the rising of the sun, he found it to rise on a people to whom we had given no shelter from it.' (18: 83-4, 88-9).

It is generally assumed that Zulkarnain stands for Alexander the Great, who could move from the West to the East, i.e., the points where the sun sets and rises. The East and the West are here regarded as specific *positions in Space*, rather than as *directions*.

(b) *Theology*.

Under Theology, generally three problems receive special attention:—

- (1) The existence and nature of God.
- (2) Freedom of the Individual.
- (3) Immortality of the Soul.

So far as the existence of God is concerned, reliance is mainly placed on what are now known as the Cosmological and Teleological arguments. It is pointed out that neither the subordinate deities in whom the idolatrous Arabs believed, nor the divinities whom the Jews and the Christians joined to God, could possibly have created the world in which we live. As regards the character of God, the teaching of the Koran is rather confusing. In human life, character means integration of personality, a fixed habit of willing. God, as conceived in Islam, seems to have no character. The having of a character is a limita-

tion to arbitrary action. The idea of any limitation, as applied to God, is repugnant to muslim ideology. God is compassionate and merciful, is all-knowing, but above all He is Mighty. Now Might may be and is understood in two different, mutually conflicting ways. There are some who believe that the mark of a strong government is that its very existence is apt to be unperceived: everything goes on so smoothly. Others believe that the mark of a strong government is its ability to impose its indeterminate will on all. The God of Islam is a wayward Potentate. This leaves us utterly in the dark about the fate that awaits us. Sometimes we are told that our deeds will determine our fate; sometimes, that not our deeds but our faith will be the determining factor. And again we are told that both our deeds and faith are predetermined for us by God. 'He guideth whom He will, and misguideth whom He will.' It may outrage our sense of proportion that men are to be damned eternally for the doings of a single brief life, but so it is decreed by God. It may sound blasphemous, but the question is legitimate—Are we more to blame for what we do or are supposed to do here, or is God more to blame for having made the sorry stuff that we are? And if forgiveness is necessary, which of the two parties is to grant it? Omar Khayyam gave a poignant expression to this difficulty in a well-known quatrain:—

'O Thou, who Man of baser Earth did make,

And ev'n with Paradise devise the Snake:
For all the Sin wherewith the Face of Man
Is blackened—Man's forgiveness give—and take!'

In regard to personal immortality, the position of Islam is not very satisfactory. Our life begins at a point, but never ends. Islam does not believe in pre-existence of the Soul, but maintains that every soul that happens to appear on the stage of life will ever abide—in the grave before the general resurrection, and in Heaven or Hell thereafter. But if our existence begins with our birth, why does it not pass away with our death? Islam's answer is that this would be a negation of the moral government of the world. No one's account is completely settled before the time of his death. If justice is to be justified, the account must be settled in the future. This is the ethical basis of future rewards and punishments. This is good so far as it goes, but does not the same logic compel us to look back to the past as well? Our present life is an opportunity. Is this opportunity the same in the case of us all? It is certainly not. The differences between man and man, the moral and intellectual capital with which we start, are very material and are not intelligible, unless we look back to the past. Justice does not merely demand that we should reap hereafter what we sow now, but also that what we are reaping now is our wage for what we have done before. All the arguments urged in favour of immortality can be urged in

favour of pre-existence as well.

(c) *Civil Law.*

The Koran contains a lot on the Civil Law. We shall confine ourselves to a brief reference to two points only—

(1) The status of Woman.

(2) The institution of Slavery.

Mohammad accepted slavery as a natural institution. When a slave became a muslim, he was given his freedom. Mohammad himself gave a lead in the matter, when he granted freedom to Zaid on the latter embracing Islam. When Islam started on its military career, women generally formed a part of the booty. Such women practically became slaves of the captors. Sexual intercourse with them was not regarded as adultery, not even a minor blame. They were an addition to the regularly-wedded wives, and there was no limit prescribed to the number of such woman that a muslim might take. Beyond these bounds, self-control was strictly enjoined.

(d) *Violence in religious propaganda.*

So far as the dissemination of religion is concerned, Islam started quite well, and forbade the use of coercion in matters of faith. But with the passage of time, its attitude in the matter underwent a complete change. The use of violence became legitimate, even meritorious. Islam rendered a great service to the cause of Religion

in laying so much stress on the oneness of God; but in exalting religious intolerance and fanaticism, it exercised a baneful influence on the spiritual well-being and growth of the human race. S. T. Coleridge draws pointed attention to these two outstanding features of Mohammad's work. His short poem 'Mahomet' opens thus—

'Utter the song, O my Soul! the flight and return
of Mohammad,

Prophet and priest, who scattered abroad both evil
and blessing,

Huge wasteful empires founded and hallow'd slow
persecution,

Soul-withering, but crushed the blasphemous rites of
the Pagan,

And idolatrous Christians.'

6. THE GROTH OF MUSLIM SECTS*

During the life-time of Mohammad, the followers of the new faith were held together mainly due to his dominant personality. There was one point, however, which was already agitating some minds. This related to his successor. Probably he could not decide between Ali, his son-in-law, and Abu-Bekr, his father-in-law. Possibly he had his own preferences, but did not want to pre-

* For material used in this section, the writer is much indebted to Najmul Ghani Khan's *Mazabib-ul-Islam*, a comprehensive account of muslim sects.

capitate matters by declaring his mind openly. When Mohammad died, Abu-Bekr was selected as the first Khalifa. The claims of Ali were ignored on two subsequent occasions too. Abu-Bekr nominated Omar as his successor. When Omar died, Ali was offered the Khalfate, but the conditions that were attached to the office were not acceptable to him. So he had to make room for Osman. Ali had his chance as the fourth Khalifa.

The status of Ali is the main point that divides the two main sects of Islam—the *Sunnies* and the *Shaiyas*. The Sunnies or the traditionists hold that the first three Khalfas held their office rightfully; the Shaiyas hold that they were mere usurpers, and that Ali alone had the right to succeed Mohammad. Some of the Shaiya sub-sects went much further than this, and maintained that Ali was equal to Mohammad, if not his superior. God had really meant His messages (the Koran) to be delivered to Ali, but the angel Gabriel had blundered and delivered them to Mohammad. This is stated clearly in the Persian Divan of Shams Tabrez:

'Gabriel who came down with messages from God, the peerless, met Mohammad, but the person intended for his interviews was Ali.'

The Sunnies and the Shaiyas have both a number of sub-sects and there are many sects which are independent of both. There is a tradition that Mohammad himself had foretold that, as against the 71 sects of the

Hebrews and 72 sects of the Christians, there would be 73 sects of the muslims. Some muslims hold that this was a prophecy that has come true; others hold that the prophet was merely referring to the fissiparous tendencies that would manifest themselves in course of time. Some of the sects have now ceased to be live sects, but, for our present purpose, they possess some significance, as they throw light on the reactions in the muslim fold itself to the original tenets of Islam.

Muslim sects are sometimes divided into *Najies* (those destined to secure *nijat* or salvation) and *naries* (those destined for the fires of hell). Quite naturally, each sect regards itself as the only *naji* sect. Generally it is held that all muslims have the same *iman* (doctrine); they only differ in respect of *din* (performance of duty). Some sects hold that *iman* alone matters, and so all muslims will be saved and no one else will be. Others hold that not belief but practice only matters. They are of opinion that every muslim will have to pass through Hell, to be purged of his inequities; the non-believers will suffer tortures permanently.

Every one of the tenets of Islam became a subject of bitter controversy. 'Was God essentially qualified or unqualified? Some held that God could not have any eternal attribute, because this would rob Him of the position of being the only Eternal. About the prophets, the general opinion was that they were innocent, and had not to

struggle against evil; but many held the opinion that, as human beings, they were liable to lapses and did succumb to temptation. The Hasharites held this latter view, and they supported their contention by quoting from the Koran to show that Adam, Abraham, Moses, David, Solomon, Joseph and Mohammad himself had transgressed against the law of God. In regard to Mohammad, they pointed to seven passages in the Koran which showed that he was not quite innocent.*

About man's nature and destiny, controversy raged round the doctrine of predestination. Some sects held that man was a free agent and thus earned his reward and punishment. The orthodox view has been that all causality belongs to God, and man's destiny entirely rests on God's will. Some of those who believed in the freedom of man were keenly alive to the injustice of eternal bliss or torment being the reward for a single life of meagre duration. They believed in the plurality of lives or transmigration of the Soul. The Nasirites, the sect founded by Nasir, believed in a continuous process of evolution or decay. The famous couplet of Maulana Rumi will here occur to some among the readers:

'I have arisen from the earth again and again like vegetation; I have been through as many as 670 bodies.'

Rumi's view about the mixed character of the teaching

* M. Najmul Ghani Khan: *Mazabib-ul-Islam*, pp. 560-6.

of the Koran is expressed in another, equally famous, couplet:—

‘I picked up the marrow from the Koran; the bones
I flung to the dogs.’

CHAPTER III

BUDDHISM

1. THE LIFE OF GAUTAMA BUDDHA

1. *The names of Buddha.*

Gautama Buddha, the founder of Buddhism, assumed the name Buddha, the Enlightened, at the age of 35, when, after six years of ascetic exercises and meditation, he felt convinced that he had attained his goal of seeing 'Truth in its purity and majesty. Gautama was his family name, and it appears that during the period of six years that elapsed between his renunciation and enlightenment, he was addressed as 'friend Gautama.' His personal name was Siddhartha, the man of satisfied desires—an appropriate name to be chosen for a prince.

After attaining enlightenment, Buddha referred to himself as *Tathagata*. This name is full of interest, partly because Buddha himself fancied it, and partly because of the diverse interpretations that have been offered. Literally, *Tathagata* means—'so he went away.' How can we complete these words into a full sentence? One of the answers given is—'As he came, so did he go away.' Buddha often referred to himself as a wayfarer. He be-

lieved that all existence is transient and so is human life. The 'wayfarer' appositely symbolises unceasing mobility or flux. As a Hindu, Buddha had implicit faith in transmigration or metempsychosis. He believed that he had passed through innumerable lives prior to his life as Gautama Buddha, and that this was to be his last life on the earth and the final stage in his evolution. He also believed that his was not the solitary case of the evolutionary process coming to a successful culmination. There had been other Buddhas before him, and 'as they had gone before him, so did he go away.' Yet another interpretation was given by Buddha himself. In the course of a sermon to his disciples, he said—'As a Tathagata speaks, so he does; as he does, so he speaks. Thus, since he does as he says and says as he does, is he called a Tathagata.' Here stress is laid on the sincerity of the Tathagata; his 'going' means his 'functioning.' 'So he lived.'

2. *Previous lives of Buddha.*

Buddha firmly believed in the plurality of lives and claimed that he knew about his innumerable previous lives. He also took his disciples into confidence and told them about some of his previous lives. He said once that as a result of immaculate living for seven years, he was exempt from the bondage of birth and death for seven *Kalpas* or aeons. He indicated the duration of a *kalpa* in a graphic manner thus—'There is a big mountain, a

completely crackless solid rock. A man gives it a gentle stroke with a fine Banaras cloth, once at the end of a century. The duration of a *kalpa* exceeds the amount of time that it will take the mountain to wear out under the man's strokes.' The question arose in Buddha's mind about the causes that had led to such marvellous results. He found that it was all due to the practice of Charity, to Purity and to noble Aspirations.

Reference may be made here to two of the previous lives of Buddha, of which he spoke to his disciples and which incidentally exhibit two sharply contrasted phases in his psychic evolution. When he married Yasodhara in a *swayamvara*, it appeared to all to be a case of 'love at first sight.' Long after, he was asked about the matter and accounted for 'the love at first sight' thus:

'Long, long ago, I was a tiger roaming in a jungle along with other tigers. There was a lovely tigress that aroused fierce passion in the tigers. On one occasion, there was a bitter fight among the tigers to woo her and win her. The tigers fought frantically till they fell down exhausted and panting. I was one of them. The tigress arose from the ground, came up to where I was and began to lick my panting flanks. This was a clear indication of her preference. With her, I leapt away into the jungle.

When Yasodhara came to the arena, she had a covering shawl with border stripes, which were exactly like the stripes on the skin of the tigress. My love at first

sight to Yasodhara was a case of the revival of an old bond of union.'

In the second case, the Buddha-to-be was not a fierce tiger, but a compassionate Brahmin. The Brahmin, roaming about in a dry hill-stream, came on a day at a spot where he observed a lioness with her cubs. The lioness was quite famished and reduced to a skeleton; her cubs, with her dry udders in their mouths, were equally famished. This sight so moved the Brahmin that he threw himself before the lioness, who made short work of him and satisfied herself and her cubs with such noble flesh.

3. *The birth of Buddha.*

The story of the birth of Buddha is very fascinating. Fact and fancy, prose and poetry, share between themselves the credit for making it interesting. As time passes, a great man tends to become legendary. The early part of his life, which is more private than public, is represented as a mystery, something far removed from what is normal and common. This has happened in the case of Buddha.

In the heavens, we are told, the celestial spirits noted a number of signs which generally appear prior to the birth of a Buddha, and said—'It is now time that Buddha should be born again and re-establish the Law on the earth.' Buddha said, 'Yes, the time is come. I shall be born in a Sakya family in the south of the Himalayas, where the

ruler is just, and the people peace-loving.'

The same night, Maya, the wife of Suddhodhan, the ruler of Kapilvastu, dreamt a strange dream. She saw a lumious star, shaped like an elephant with six tusks, descend from the firmament and enter into her womb. When she awoke, she experienced a state of unusual beatitude. Before it was sunrise, half the world was illumined with a strange light, the mountains quaked, the waves on the surface of water were still, and the flowers which normally open up at noon, opened up at daybreak. Suddhodhan summoned the wise readers of dreams and asked them to interpret Maya's dream and the attendant marvellous phenomena. The dream-readers told him that it all augured well: Maya would bring forth a son, who would be either a great king or the saviour of men. When the period of pregnancy was about to come to an end, Maya was one day standing under a tree in the compound of the palace. The tree was very tall, its stem was long and the foliage thick. The branches of the tree bent down and made a sort of a room for Maya; flowers emerged from the ground and made a soft bed for her; and water began to gush out from a rock near by. Maya, all alone, was delivered of a son.

When the news of the childbirth became known, a palanquin arrived at the spot to fetch the baby to a room in the palace. The honour of carrying him to his room was shared by four protective *devas* from Sumeru, who,

just to remain *incognito*, assumed human forms for the purpose. The birth of the prince became the topic of talk everywhere, and attracted a number of pious men to the palace. Among them was Asita, a holy man. Maya wanted to place the baby at Asita's feet, but he would not let her do so. Instead he bowed before the babe and worshipped him. He told the king that the baby had on his body all the marks of a Buddha, and would be the saviour of men. He added that, as mother of a Buddha, Maya was now a blessed lady, was too good to remain on the earth any longer, and in a week's time would pass away in a painless manner. This actually happened.

4. *Life at Kapilvastu: first 29 years.*

According to the dream-readers, there were two alternative possibilities about the future of the new-born prince. Asita had dismissed one of them. The preference of Suddhodhana was naturally for a glorious wordly career for his son. He did all he could to see that the young prince would grow not only in comfort, but a lover of enjoyment, and certainly not moody and introspective. Even when he became a stripling, the palace was the world for him. In spite of all this, Siddhartha, as the prince had been named, *was* a moody and introspective boy. This was disconcerting to Suddhodhana and he made Siddharatha's surroundings even more seductive. When he was 18 years of age, the king decided that the prince

should marry. To enable him to get a girl of his own choice, a *swayamvara* or spouse-choice ceremony was arranged, and Siddhartha married the charming Yasodhara. This union, as we have already said, was itself a triumph of congenital disposition.

Years passed and Sidhartha grew up, almost an internee in the palace, surrounded by all sorts of means of sensuous enjoyment. We do not know much about the training he received. He probably received the training that befitted a prince. Certainly his training did not equip him for the work that was to be his life-work. And this for two reasons. Theology and metaphysics were then treasured in Sanskrit and were the close preserve of Brahmins. We have ample evidence from the later life of Buddha that he did not know Sanskrit, and that theology and metaphysics were not included in the subjects of his studies at Kapilvastu. Apart from the influence of the current social organisation, Suddhodhana had a very good reason to keep Siddhartha away from such studies.

About 10 or 11 years after their marriage, Sidhartha and Jasodhara were blessed with a son. Did this frighten Siddhartha as a new chain that would keep him bound to the world which probably he already wanted to flee? We don't know. The new baby was named Rahula. About this time, Siddhartha went out one day with some companions to see life as it was lived in the surrounding country-side. Not far from the palace, he saw a collec-

tion of mud huts, a vivid picture of poverty and squalor. Passing on, he saw successively an aged man, groaning under the weight of his years, a diseased person in a miserable plight, and a dead body that was being carried to the cremation ground. He realised that life was not merely Comfort, Youth and Health. Poverty and need, old age and disease were also the lot of almost all. And, for all, life was necessarily transient; in the struggle between life and death, the latter was always the victor. He also saw a *sadhu*, whom he found to be singularly care-free and happy. What a contrast between the two modes of life! Could not he too break the shackles and go out a free man, a *sanyasin*?

He came back to the palace a changed man.

5. *The Renunciation.*

The same night Suddhodhana dreamt eight fearful dreams. A wise interpreter of dreams told him that in a week's time Siddhartha would quit the palace. He would renounce his position as the prince, but his empire would be much vaster than the principality that he would renounce. Suddhodhana tightened the security measures against Siddhartha's flight. At the end of the week, Yasodhara woke up agitated, awakened Siddhartha, who was lying by her side, and told him that she had dreamt three horrid dreams, one of them to the effect that she found him missing from her bed. Siddhartha consoled her and

coaxed her to sleep, telling her that he would keep a vigil and nothing untoward would happen. Yasodhara slept and lost her husband. Siddhartha got up and noiselessly crept away from the house. He awakened Channa, his trusty charioteer, and asked him to get ready with Kanthaka, his favourite horse. This was immediately done. The outer iron gate normally required a hundred men to fling it open, and the sound of its opening was heard miles away. But that night, the doors noiselessly flung open of themselves, a spontaneous growth of flowers on the path made the trotting of Kanthaka inaudible, the guards fell into a sound sleep, and Siddhartha left the palace to adopt a new mode of life. Reaching the edge of a forest, he cut his long black hair with his sword, bade good bye to his charioteer, his horse and the sword. He exchanged his rich robes with the clothes of a beggar. Prince Siddhartha was dead; 'brother Gautama,' a *sanyasin*, was born. As history has shown, it was a great event.

6. *In quest of Truth and Enlightenment.*

The Renunciation took place when Siddhartha was 29 years of age. The six years that followed were spent mainly in the practice of austerities and in meditation. Buddha's leaving his home was of the nature of a personal adventure. He was dissatisfied with the life that he was leading, and wanted to exchange it for a more satisfactory mode of life. He wanted to conquer Death. There is

nothing to show that he left home with a definite mission, to preach a new message as a Teacher. He came out as a seeker after Truth. As we have already hinted, his equipment for his new task was meagre. He was born and bred in a Kshatiya family and a royal household. How was he to proceed in his new situation?

He visited first Alar Kalam, a noted sage, and learnt from him something about the theory and practice of Yoga. Later, he spent sometime with Uddaka and appropriated whatever Uddaka could give or Gautama himself could absorb. The main difficulty in the way of self-realization was the obtuseness of the flesh. According to the view generally accepted by the *sannyasins*, the very first step on the path of realisation was self-control, the subjugation of all longing for objects of sense. The practice of austerities was the effectual means to secure the end. Gautama must go through a severe course of austerities. He was probably also told that, according to the ancient seers, Truth in the last resort is an object of direct *vision*, rather than something to be communicated by another. This vision is the result of intense meditation. After getting whatever he could get from Alar Kalam and Uddaka, Gautama turned his thoughts to austerities and meditation. For sometime, austerities loomed larger in his view, and we are told that he practised them in the extremest form. He fasted, lived on a single mouthful a day, and sustained himself on the most

revolting substances like human and animal excreta. Once when he was in a state of utter exhaustion, a party of minstrels passed by him. A girl sang an exquisitely sweet song, while her companions played on some instruments. The beauty of the matter of the song quite matched the beauty of its form. The substance of the song was this:—

‘Wherever we go singing, the hearers dance with us. If the strings of the instrument are stretched taut, they snap and the music stops. If they are not stretched enough, they produce no music. Stretch not the strings much, nor too little, but moderately, for thus alone they can give music.’

The party of the minstrels passed on, but the song of the girl left Gautama a changed man. ‘Sometimes,’ said he, ‘the ignorant instruct the wise; the girl has told me that stretching the strings of my being too taut, I shall break the very instrument that is meant to produce music.’ He bade good-bye to severe austerities, left the place and took his abode under a tree with an entirely changed outlook on life. That very night he felt that he saw the Truth face to fact. He also heard a voice from within, telling him that he was a man with a mission and would preach a new message. Gautama was 35, when he received his *bodha* and became the Buddha, the Enlightened.

7. *The period of the Ministry.*

Immediately after obtaining *bodha*, Buddha started his ministry and continued his work literally to the end of his life, for he made his last convert when he was on his death-bed. He did his work for 45 years, and, as the region to which his itineracy was confined was rather limited, it was very intensive work. Quite naturally, he first thought of his two preceptors, Alar Kalam and Uddaka, but they had both died. He set out in search of the five anchorites, his erstwhile companions who had left him sometime before, on perceiving that his faith in the efficacy of austerities was declining. He found them at Banaras, delivered to them his new message and made them the first converts to the new faith. His simple teaching attracted a large number of laymen, but his special concern was to found an Order of *Bhikshus* or Monks. When a man was admitted to the Order, he had to take the following three vows:—

- (i) I take my refuge in the Buddha.
- (ii) I take my refuge in the Norm or the Teaching.
- (iii) I take my refuge in the Order.

Buddha laid down very stringent rules for the guidance of his Monks. Each new entrant into the Order had to pass some years in apprenticeship, and, when qualified for the work, was to do it independently. Buddha was opposed to the admission of women to the Order. He

was confronted with a serious situation, when Prajapati, who had suckled him after the death of his mother, insisted that she be admitted. Buddha resisted for some time, but had to give in. In doing this, he was driving a thorn into his flesh. The doors of the Order had to be thrown open to women. His reaction to the new step taken was expressed in his declaration that the Good Norm, which was destined to last for a thousand years, would now stand fast for five hundred years only. The following special regulations were prescribed for the 'sisters':—

(1) A 'sister,' whatever her age, should rise up, salute and bow before every 'brother.'

(2) No 'sister' should spend the rainy season, when missionary work had to be suspended, apart from the company of some 'brother.'

(3) At the end of a rainy season, every 'sister' should invite an enquiry into her conduct. A 'sister' found guilty of wrong-doing would do prescribed penance.

(4) *Bhikshus* were free to preach to both sexes, but a 'sister' was allowed to preach to women only.

Buddha had five hundred members of the Order at the time of his death. Among the *Bhikshus* recruited by Buddha, two deserve special mention. They were both his cousins and presented notable contrasts in character. Anand was the very embodiment of devotion to Buddha, but was very obtuse; Devadutta was very intelligent, but was deficient in devotion to the Master. Possibly he

thought more of the Norm than of the founder of the Norm. When Buddha was advanced in years and infirm, Devadutta suggested that he should retire from the leadership of the Order and entrust it to Devadutta. Buddha did not agree to the suggestion. Devadutta either seceded from the Order or was expelled from it, and established a separate Order. Some Monks left with him, and he also won over a prince who had contributed liberally to Buddha's Order. This disconcerted some of Buddha's associates. Probably Buddha was referring to this, when he exhorted his men to realise that a donor had the right to determine the manner in which his charities were to be disbursed.

Buddha never forgave Devadutta for his defection.

8. *The Last Days.*

When Buddha was about 80 years of age, Mara, the Evil One, appeared to him and reminded him of the talk they had had immediately after Buddha's enlightenment. • Mara had then suggested to Buddha that having obtained enlightenment, he should 'utterly pass away;' but Buddha had rejected the suggestion on the ground that his own *Nirvana* must wait, till he had established the Norm on the Earth and trained an adequate number of disciples to carry on his work after him. Now that the Norm had been established and an adequate number of disciples trained, it was time, suggested Mara, that Buddha should

utterly pass away. Buddha told Mara that at the end of three months, he *would* pass away.

This decision was accompanied by a mighty earthquake and thunder. Buddha revealed to Anand the meaning of these happenings and told his disciples that it was now time for him 'to go.' A grievous sickness came upon him. It looked as if it would prove fatal, but Buddha wanted yet to live for a little time more, and his strong Will proved stronger than the disease.

When Buddha was staying in the mango grove of Cunda of the metal-workers' caste, the latter approached him and requested him to have his meal, along with his disciples, at Cunda's house. Buddha accepted the invitation. When the company arrived at Cunda's house, Buddha noted that, among other things, fat hogsflesh that was diseased and poisonous was cooked for them. One of the regulations that Buddha had framed for the Order required the Monks to accept whatever was offered them for food. Buddha told Cunda to serve the fat hogsflesh to him alone and not to his companions. Cunda did not ask for the reason, but obeyed. After the meal was over, Buddha told Cunda to have the remaining hogsflesh buried underground, for it was not meet food for anyone—man or beast. Cunda again obeyed, but now a wiser and a sadder man than before. Soon after the meal was taken, Buddha had a virulent attack of dysentery and left for Kusinar with Anand. On the way, he felt very weary and

had to stop under a tree for rest. He felt that the circumstances in which he was passing away would probably bring Cunda in general disfavour and disgrace. He was anxious to avert this, and directed Anand to convey to Cunda that Buddha regarded two meals served to him as exceeding any other meal in merit—first, the meal that Sujata had served him just before his attainment of enlightenment, and second the meal that Cunda had served him just before his utterly passing away.

When Buddha arrived at Kusinar, everyone could see that the end was almost come. He told his followers that four places connected with his life and work would be places of pilgrimage for the believers—the place of his birth, the place of his receiving *bodha*, the place where the first sermon was preached and the place of his death. He feelingly referred to the deviation of Anand to himself, and told them that after he was gone, his Instruction would be their Teacher. Strange, very strange, as it may appear, when he was breathing his last breaths, he spoke very harshly about Channa, a monk in the Order. He directed that Channa be completely ostracised by the brethren; no one should speak to him or answer any of his questions.

The time for final leave-taking was come. Buddha declared that of the five hundred Monks in the Order, 'the most backward was a stream-winner.' Previously he had said that no one outside the Order had this dis-

tion! His last words to the assembled *Bhikshus* were: 'Subject to decay are all compounded things; remain always heedful.'

And Buddha passed away.

2. THE TEACHINGS OF BUDDHA

The Background.

In order to appreciate the character and significance of the teachings of Buddha, we should start with a proper understanding of its background. The following points deserve careful attention.

Siddhartha was the scion of a Kshatrya family. He was brought up as a Kshatrya and was probably trained to be an administrator. There is nothing to show that he received any instruction worth the name in the Sanskrit Language or Literature. Theology and Metaphysics, then a monopoly of the Brahmins, were an unexplored realm to him.

His life at Kapilvastu was more or less that of an internee. This is why when, at the comparatively advanced age of twentynine, he saw life in its repulsive aspects of poverty, old age and disease, he received a shock which would otherwise be ununderstandable. We are given to understand that this was practically the first occasion when he realised that life was not all music and joy. Death appeared to him as something far removed

from the normal. Pain struck him as the most glaring aspect of life.

After renunciation, it was too late for him to start as a serious student of Theology and Metaphysics. The only resources left to him were—acquiring some knowledge of the theory and practice of Yoga and the practice of austerities. The first did not keep him engaged for long, and the second began to lose its fascination after four or five years. The song of the minstrel girl proved the proverbial last straw.

He had never been much interested in ritual, which seems to have become the essence of Brahminism in his time. He was particularly outraged by animal-sacrifices which had become common.

In regard to social life, he was outraged by the distinctions that had turned a large section of the community into outcastes and untouchables. He became intolerant of the Brahmin supremacy in the hierarchy that had been artificially created.

On the positive side, Buddha's equipment was the instruction he had received from Alar Kalam and Uddaka in the theory and practice of Yoga. This was aided by his strong commonsense, and, later, by varied experience of men and their affairs, which enabled him to talk straight to the masses in the language they understood, and on the problems which were the problems of their daily life.

For all practical purposes he identified Religion with Morality.

The Content of the Bodha.

Buddha had spent six years, sometimes with other *sanniyasins* and sometimes alone, in search after Truth, and he felt that under the *bodhi* tree he saw Truth, face to face. What was the Truth that he thus saw? What was the content of his *bodha*? This, as he reiterated again and again, comprised the Four Noble Truths:—

(1) Existence is inseparable from Suffering: there is Suffering in Birth, Suffering in Decay or old age, Suffering in Disease, and Suffering in Death. All effort to rid life of Suffering is doomed to failure. It is possible to obtain Pleasure, but the effort to obtain it is painful, and how long can one have the pleasure in one's grasp? With the lapse of time, pleasure inevitably palls and ultimately turns into pain.

(2) Pain is not merely an inseparable accident of life, it is the very substance of life. It proceeds from Desire or Craving (*trishna*)—the Will to Live. This Craving has been functioning in the previous lives of the individual and is functioning in his present life. It gives rise to all the faults that we commit in our lives.

(3) Release from suffering is very difficult to attain, but is not absolutely impossible. As suffering is insepar-

able from individual existence, cessation of suffering is possible only as a result of cessation of individuality. This is *Nirvana*. Universal suicide or complete abstention from procreation will not solve the problem, if they are effects of a *desire* or *craving* for cessation; for this craving, like all other craving, will itself be a hindrance in the way of attaining *Nirvana*. *Nirvana* can follow from a certain mode of life or discipline pursued *disinterestedly*.

(4) This mode of life or discipline is the noble Eight-fold Path. Buddha also refers to it as the Middle Path. It is not easy to reconcile the idea of the Path being a Middle Path with the extreme renunciation that Buddha often preaches. The Eight-fold Path comprises the following parts (or stages, in a determinate sequence?):—

- (a) Right View or Conception,
- (b) Right Aim or Aspiration,
- (c) Right Speech,
- (d) Right Conduct,
- (e) Right Livelihood,
- (f) Right Application,
- (g) Right Mindfulness,
- (h) Right Meditation.

Buddha's discourses and talks were mainly concerned with the elucidation of the Four Truths and the Eight-

fold Path. About the latter, his elucidations may be summarized as follows:—

(1) Right view is the comprehension of the Four Truths, as described above.

(2) Right Aspiration comprises Renunciation and Harmlessness.

(3) Right speech comprises abstinence from Falsehood, Backbiting, Abuse, and Frivolous Talk.

(4) Right Conduct comprises abstinence from

(i) Taking life or Violence,

(ii) Stealing or taking things without owner's permission,

(iii) Adultery or Incontinence.

In some places, abstaining from Falsehood is mentioned under this head. Sometimes abstinence from the use of intoxicants is also added.

(5) Right Livelihood means honest work for wages.

(6) Right Application or Effort means an effort to prevent the rising of evil tendencies and to suppress them when they have arisen. It also means, on the positive side, an effort to bring into being favourable conditions, and to develop and make a full use of such conditions when they have arisen.

(7) Mindfulness is spiritual Alertness and Self-control in its diverse forms.

(8) *Samadhi* or Meditation is concentration. It has

four stages: in the first stage, meditation has an object as its centre; in the second stage, it is objectless. In both the forms there is zest and joy. In the third stage, the zest disappears, but the joy remains. Even in this stage, we are not in the state of perfect equilibrium or balance. This last is attained in the fourth and the final stage.

The above is a brief *resume* of Buddha's teaching on its practical side. He avoided entering into metaphysical discussion, on the ground mainly that such discussion did not lead to any commensurate results. But he could not eschew Metaphysics altogether. The theoretical basis of his teaching may be stated as follows:—

(1) All that is compounded is subject to decay. Nothing that exists is permanent.

(2) All life is an ever-rolling wheel with its four spokes—Birth, Growth, Decay and Death. Every one of these aspects is steeped in misery.

(3) All life is One. There is no real principle of differentiation in the form of a spiritual substance or the Soul. All reality is substanceless.

(4) All that happens—and all that is is merely occurrence or happening—is subject to inexorable Law. Our misery is the effect of craving and this craving is, through a causal chain, rooted in Ignorance. Release is possible only through *bodha* or knowledge.

A necessary consequence of the Law of Causation or Law of Karma is transmigration or metempsychosis.

Belief in transmigration is also a cardinal point in Buddhist metaphysics.

3. SPREAD OF BUDDHISM AND THE TWO SCHOOLS

As we have seen above, there were five hundred members of the Order at the time of Buddha's death. If he really meant what he said, his opinion about the *Bhikshus* was very high indeed. When he was breathing his last breaths, he wanted to know whether any of his disciples had any doubt or perplexity about the Doctrine. No one spoke a word and Anand told him that none had any doubt or perplexity. Buddha said that Anand was speaking from *assurance*, but he himself could speak from *knowledge*: he *knew* that none had a doubt or perplexity. And he added that even the most backward of them was 'a stream-winner.' This was going very far, but he had previously gone even farther than this and asserted that 'no true monk was found outside his Order.' (*Dharmapada*: 254-5).

Except for the secession of Devadutta and some others, the Order was in complete accord on points of doctrine during the life-time of Buddha, and they all worked with noble zeal. After the death of Buddha, the canon was made definite. Buddhism had received the support of some princes during Buddha's life, but its most notable convert was secured about two centuries after Buddha's death. This was the great Asoka. It was

through his zeal that Buddhism crossed the borders of India. Mahindra, the son or younger brother of Asoka, went to Ceylon as a religious missionary and converted the King and the Court of Ceylon to Buddhism. Probably this conversion was part of a political alliance with Asoka. Asoka also sent his missionaries to Burma (then known as *Swarnabhumi*) and Buddhism secured a footing there. Later it passed on to Siam or Thailand. Buddhism, as followed in these three countries, is Orthodox Buddhism, known as Theravada or Hinayana School. It maintains the old Indian tradition.

Buddhism moved to the north into China through the efforts of some Indian Brahmins who translated the Buddhist scriptures into Chinese. It did not find in China a virgin soil, as it had found in Ceylon and Burma. The teachings of Confucius and Tao had permeated Chinese thought and life, and it was a great triumph for Buddhism to secure a footing along with the two native cults. It was after some time that the Chinese faith became an amalgam of three constituent elements. The Buddhism that passed into China was not the doctrine of the orthodox Hinayana School, but an amendment known as the Mahayana. The new school was more rationalistic than the old school and gave more liberty to the individual than Hinayana did. It attached greater importance to Meditation and reflection than to Action, and was in China known as Ch'an, a corruption of

Dhyana. Later, from China Buddhism passed into Korea and thence into Japan. Here Buddhism, Confucianism and the indigenous Shintoism formed a new amalgam. The Buddhism of Japan is known as Zen, another corruption of *Dhyana*. If we use terms with which we are quite familiar in India, we may say that the southern and eastern Buddhism is *Karma-yoga*, whereas the northern variety is *Dhyana-yoga*.

4. THE BUDDHIST DOCTRINE REVIEWED

We may now proceed to review the Buddhist doctrine. In the statement of the doctrine as given above, we have followed the Hinayana, as that form is believed to be more close to what Buddha himself taught.

The fundamental points in Buddha's teaching, as stated above, are the following:—

(1) Suffering is the very warp and woof of human existence.

(2) The root-cause of all suffering is Desire or Craving, which in essence is craving for continued existence.

(3) To overcome this Craving is within the range of possibility.

(4) This can be done by following the Eightfold Path.

These four are referred to as the four Sublime Truths or Verities. Strictly speaking, the first is the *statement of a fact*, albeit in a grossly exaggerated form; the second

and the third are *opinions*; and the fourth a *recommended course of action*. Let us examine the points briefly.

The existence of Evil in Life is undeniable. All activity aims at bringing about a situation better than the present situation, or preventing the present situation from deteriorating. This obviously implies the existence of Evil. To begin with, Evil impressed Buddha in its aspect as physical suffering—poverty or want, old age, disease and death. Later, Birth, the correlate of Death, was added to the list, and Birth, Growth, Decay and Death were referred to as the four spokes of the Wheel of Existence. When Buddha began to preach, Moral Evil too intruded itself on his attention, mainly in the form of Hate, Violence and Attachment. But physical suffering continued to be the main Evil. He did not worry much with discussing the metaphysical significance of Evil, and left alone or had to leave alone the problems that have puzzled the philosophers. He is mainly interested in what may be referred to as the statistical aspect of the problem. The existence of Pleasure is not denied, but the amount of it is quite negligible as against the amount of Suffering. Once Buddha asked his *bhikshus* whether the tears they had shed on the long journey, through the round of birth and death, were more in volume or the water of the four mighty oceans. The *bhikshus* replied that, as they understood the Norm preached by him, the tears shed by them were greater in volume than the water of the four oceans.

This reply was what he had expected and was a bald statement of fact. And Buddha was satisfied. Then he proceeded to ask a corresponding question about the mothers' milk they had sucked in their long journey, and they again replied that the amount of the milk sucked was greater than the water of the four oceans. And Buddha was satisfied. What do we get out of all this? Only this that if we accept transmigration, the amounts of Pleasure and Pain experienced in the present life fade into insignificance, when compared with the total amount of Pleasure and Pain experienced. Another point brought out is that life is chequered; it is neither all light, nor all shade, but a mixture of light and shade. But what is it that Buddha concludes from this? He lays stress on the indefinite number of births and deaths, the experience of Pain, and exhorts us to get disgusted with and turn away from the activities of existence.

When he passes to the cause of the suffering, he is not reasoning as an ordinary psychologist would do. We know now that our skin has a large number of pain-spots and pain is experienced when they are stimulated; we also know that pleasure and pain are connected with certain biological processes. Buddha is not concerned with any individual painful experience, but with pain in general, pain in the abstract. And he tells us that all our suffering is due to craving and its baneful consequences produced in our previous lives.

In maintaining the possibility of release from sorrow, he saves his doctrine from the charges of Pessimism and Fatalism. If we can improve our lot, we cease to be extreme pessimists and become *meliorists*. Buddha's emphasis on the Law of Karma, when properly appreciated, greatly enhances the sense of human dignity and responsibility. Again and again, Buddha says that 'the Buddhas only point the way'. Each wayfarer has to cover the journey himself.

The fourth point is the kernel of the whole teaching. The physician is interested in the diagnosis of a disease; the patient himself is chiefly interested in the treatment prescribed. The Eightfold Path is central to the whole system. Buddha was primarily a moral teacher. We now turn to his code of morals.

As we have seen above, the Eightfold Path comprises—Right view, Right Aspiration, Right Speech, Right Conduct, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Mindfulness and Meditation. Very good guidance for the conduct of life, so far as it goes. But does it go all the way or even far enough? And what is the principle, if any, on which it is based? Are we given a logical deduction from a principle or a set of principles, or a mere enumeration of good counsels? In the Dhammapada, we are told that we can get rid of the unlimited suffering, which is our common lot, with the help of Faith, Right Action, Energy, Meditation, Determination of Truth, Wisdom, Virtuous Conduct and

Mindfulness. Here too we have eight remedies, but they differ in some respects from the list comprised in the more authoritative Eightfold Path. We have also seen that Buddha told his disciples that having practised Alms-giving (*Dan*), Right Action (*Shil*) and Purity of Motive (*Bhavana*) for seven years, he had secured release from the round of birth and death for seven aeons. It is rather strange that Alms-giving finds no place in either list and *bhavana* is not explicitly included. Confining ourselves to the Eightfold Path, it would be worthwhile to enquire how Buddha arrived at the specific list.

The *ashtangamarga* of Buddha quite naturally reminds us of the *ashtangayoga* of Patanjali. The mere fact that both the disciplines comprise eight organs suggests that there is a vital connection between the two. In this connection, three points deserve notice:—

(1) The only formal training that Buddha is known to have received in Theology and Metaphysics was received by him when, after renunciation, he spent some time with Alara Kalam and Uddaka, learning about the theory and practice of Yoga.

(2) After attaining Enlightenment and assuming the role of a Teacher, Buddha expressed his estimate of Yoga in the following words:

‘Wisdom springs from the practice of Yoga and Decay from lack of the practice. Knowing this

twofold path of rise and fall, let a man so deport himself that Wisdom may grow.' (Dhammapada, 282).

(3) Among the abnormal powers that Buddha had acquired, he himself mentioned the following in his discourses to his disciples:—

- (a) Destroying the impacts of sense he could pass into the sphere of boundless space, thence into the sphere of boundless consciousness, thence into the sphere of nothingness, thence into the sphere where there is neither perception nor non-perception, and thence finally into the sphere of cessation of consciousness.
- (b) He could become multiform, could pass through a wall or a hillock, could plunge through solid ground, could fly in the air, could stretch his hand to the moon or the sun.
- (c) He could recall in detail the events of his previous lives. He could also recall other people's past lives and knew about their fates after the dissolution of their bodies.
- (d) He had also the power of thought-reading and could know what was passing in other people's minds.

Many of these powers are commonly believed to be included among the *Yoga-siddhies*.

The cumulative effect of these points is to incline the mind to believe that Buddha's *ashtangamarga* was a modification of Patanjali's *ashtangayoga*, or both of them derived from a common source. It will be worthwhile to compare them in some detail. The two lists are given below:

Ashtanga Yoga

1. *Yama* (Other-regarding Virtues)—
 - (i) Non-violence
 - (ii) Truthfulness
 - (iii) Abstinence from stealing
 - (iv) Chastity
 - (v) Non-aggrandisement
2. *Niyama* (Personal Virtues)—
 - (i) Cleanliness
 - (ii) Contentment
 - (iii) Practice of Austerities
 - (iv) Study of Scriptures
 - (v) Trust in God
3. *Asana* (Steady sitting-posture)
4. *Pranayama* (Control of Respiration)
5. *Pratibara* (Withdrawal of senses from their objects)
6. *Dharna* (Focussing of Attention on an object)

7. *Dhyana* (Keeping the mind fixed on the object)
8. *Samadhi* (Meditation)

Ashtangamarga

1. Right view or Understanding
2. Right Aim or Aspiration
3. Right speech (Truthfulness)
4. Right conduct—Abstention from:
 - (i) Violence or taking Life
 - (ii) Stealing
 - (iii) Adultery or Incontinence
5. Right mode of earning a livelihood
6. Right Effort
7. Mindfulness or Alertness
8. *Samadhi* (Meditation)

The eight elements of Yoga fall into three sub-divisions. Yoga is essentially a Way of Life, and quite appropriately starts with Ethical Discipline. The Social Virtues (*Yamas*) have precedence over the Personal Virtues, for, as the Yoga clearly states, the latter can grow only in a proper social setting. This was also the view of the ancient Greeks, who regarded the good man as 'a good citizen of a good State.'

The next three items (3—5) are psycho-physical in character. *Asan* is control of the muscular apparatus, with a view to assuming a comfortable, rigid posture, prior to

meditation; *Pranayama* is control of the respiratory mechanism. It is a commonplace in Psychology and a matter of general knowledge that when we concentrate attention on an object or a problem, we become immobile or rigid, and hold our breath. These are among the prominent physiological concomitants of an act of Attention. The third item, *Pratibara*, is a withdrawal of the senses from their objects, a snapping of the link that binds the two together in our normal waking life. The last three items (6-8) are purely psychical. *Dharna* directs the mind to a determinate point, *Dhyana* keeps the mind fixed on it, and *Samadhi* produces a condition in which the sense of duality vanishes, when, so to say, there is no consciousness, but simply *sciousness*.

The list is a logical deduction, something that one could expect from a School of Philosophy. It is not easy to say the same about the other list—the *Ashtangamarga* of Buddha. How does the latter stand in relation to the former? The last three items appear to be the same in both: *Dharna* is Application or Effort; *Dhyana* is keeping the object before the mind without remission, or Mindfulness; and *Samadhi* is the last term in both.

The first item in Yoga is *Yama* and comprises five virtues:—Non-violence, Truthfulness, Chastity, Non-stealing and Non-aggrandisement. These appear as items 3, 4 and 5 in the *Ashtangamarga*. Right-livelihood means acting on the principle—‘Work for your wage’ or ‘do not

covet.' Buddha's list omits the second group (3-5) in the Yoga list. A comfortable posture and regulated breathing are physiological concomitants of Meditation. Buddha did not think it necessary to assign to them an exalted place in his *marga*. *Pratibara* (No. 5 in the Yoga list) may be regarded as an acquired capacity rather than an individual act. Probably Buddha regarded it thus. Among the abnormal powers claimed by Buddha for himself, to which reference has been made above, the very first is 'destroying the impacts of sense' and 'passing into the sphere of boundless space.' This is very close to *Pratibara* of Yoga.

The difference between the two lists thus mainly reduces itself to two points—

- (a) Buddha appears to omit the *Niyamas* (item 2) of Yoga.
- (b) He adds Right View and Right Aim (items 1 and 2 in the *Marga*).

In this difference capable of any further reduction? The *Niyamas* of Yoga are—

- (a) Cleanliness
- (b) Contentment
- (c) Practice of Austerities
- (d) Study of Scriptures
- (e) Trust in God

In order to correctly appreciate the attitude of Buddha to these virtues, we must not forget that Buddha's Code of Morals was drawn up mainly for his *bhikshus*, an Order of mendicants. Cleanliness means cleanliness of the body, of clothes, of the dwelling-place, of the surroundings. The cleanliness of the body is easy and depends on the care and taste of the individual, but in respect of its other forms, a *bhikshu* cannot be held rigidly responsible. For his clothes, he has to depend on others; he has no fixed dwelling-place, but is constantly on the move; the environment of his dwelling is without any delimitation. As regards contentment, a *bhikshu* has to be content with what he gets. Buddha had ordained that the *bhikshus* ask for nothing. Contentment for them was not a virtue but a necessity. As regards the practice of Austerities, Buddha had had a rather unpleasant experience of them, and had to abjure them once and for all. As regards the study of Scriptures, Buddha himself had not read them, and wanted to be himself the Teacher of a code of Morals. He himself wrote nothing, and the Buddhist Scriptures, as we have them, were written long after his death. Thus there was no occasion for him to include the first four of the *Niyamas* in his list. As regards the fifth, Trust in God, the position is not quite clear. He had decided to be a moral teacher and identified Religion with Morality. Even if he believed in the existence of God, he chose not to speak on Him. Thus he had to omit 'Trust in God' from

his list, but Faith in general occupies the very first place in the list of Eight Virtues mentioned in the Dhammapada. Right View and Right Aim, which he introduced as items 1 and 2 in his list, are in a way the warp and woof of a good life. What follows is really an explication of these two.

We thus come to the conclusion that the two schemes—the *Ashtangayoga* and the *Ashtangamarga* are substantially the same. Whether the latter was an adaptation of the former or both derived from a common source is more than we are able to say. It is not certain that Patanjali's Yoga, as we have it to-day, did exist in the time of Buddha, but it is clear that Buddha was not the founder of a new religion, but a moral teacher whose teaching was based on Yoga. He was not only a moral teacher, but an ardent social reformer and he brought to bear on his work all the zeal and energy of an iconoclast. Using a phrase that has received wide currency in recent times, his main task was a 'transvaluation of Values.'

Whether Buddha was himself much interested in metaphysical subtleties is more than we can say, but it is quite obvious that he did not discuss metaphysical questions with his disciples, or lay emphasis on them in his discourses. Malankyaputta, who had elected to follow the holy life under Buddha and was under training, was much puzzled by some metaphysical questions, on which Buddha did not express himself one way or the other. Almost exasperated,

he approached Buddha and asked him to enlighten him on the following points—

- (i) Is the World eternal or not?
- (ii) Is the World finite or infinite?
- (iii) Is Life distinct from Matter or is it only Matter?
- (iv) Is the Tathagata beyond Death or not beyond Death or

Is he both beyond Death and not beyond Death? or

Is he neither beyond Death nor not-beyond-Death? Buddha rebuked Malankyaputta and told him that when the latter came to adopt the holy life, Buddha never undertook to enlighten him on such points. And he added that he had expressed himself on some matters and not on others, with one single object in view, *viz.*, whether the question did materially affect the conduct of life: Metaphysical discussion had no such bearing. On another occasion he expressed the view that disputants on such questions looked only at one aspect of the Truth. Did he mean that Error is only partial Truth?

Notwithstanding this, Buddha did frequently speak on the transitoriness and unsubstantiality of all Existence. The cardinal principles of Buddhist Metaphysics are:—

- (i) Everything that is compounded is transient or impermanent.
- (ii) There is no abiding substance underlying the phenomenal world.

Both these points are inter-related. 'All that is *compounded* is transient'. This sounds quite simple, but does it merely mean that the fact of composition is simply the coming together of some elements, and that the elements that come together do in course of time fall asunder? So interpreted, it leaves the question of the nature of the elements undecided. Do they continue to exist as permanent Reals, or are they too transient? Is there a real change? or have we merely a succession of momentary existences? Here we have two distinct possibilities. If there is change, we have something abiding throughout the process of change. As Immanuel Kant said, *it is the Permanent alone that can change*. All change implies identity of substance. The other alternative is that there is no change and nothing to change; there is only a *succession of momentary states*. If my life so far can be divided into a thousand million states of consciousness, it is a mere illusion to suppose that I have lived through all these states. The truth is that a thousand million selves have emerged and vanished in an uninterrupted succession. Buddhist Metaphysics favours this alternative, and this is expressed in the second principle that 'there is no abiding substance underlying the phenomenal World.' Matter is nothing but a number of attributes; Spirit is nothing but series of states of consciousness. The denial of the *Atma*, as an abiding substance, is a cardinal point in Buddhist metaphysics. Let us examine it a little. We may take a con-

crete case. I am told that it is not one spirit that has persisted in me for more than 70 years, but a thousand million selves, each one of whom had but a momentary existence. This may be so, but who assigned the common name to this huge assemblage? No two of these states were contemporaneous: when the intimer could intimate, the succeeding state was not in; and when the latter came in, the intimer was gone. The spirit is reduced to a series of states, but *no series can know itself to be a series*. The consciousness of succession is quite different from the succession of consciousnesses. If there is no abiding self, how can we explain the indubitable fact of Memory? On the phenomenalistic hypothesis, *Memory has to be begged*. And what becomes of Responsibility, the sense of shame and pride in our past? Really we have no past and we are not. Buddhist Metaphysics bristles with difficulties. The reluctance of Buddha to discuss metaphysical question may have been partly due to his realisation of the difficulties that his view raised.

5. BUDDHISM IN INDIA : THE MYSTERY OF ITS COLLAPSE

For some centuries Buddhism prospered in India. It secured the patronage of the courts. The culminating point was reached when the great Asoka became a votary, and took measures to send his missions abroad to propa-

gate it. The Buddhist philosophy, as it was developed in the course of time, succeeded in securing a strong foothold in the famous seats of Learning. Probably the general populace was not deeply affected, but a considerable number of the itinerant *sadhus* were among its staunch adherents. It spread to foreign lands in the South, East and North of India, and is still the dominant cult or an essential ingredient of the dominant cult there. But in India itself, in its original home and the place of its birth, it is now mainly a subject of historical interest and research. Here is a unique phenomenon. Can we explain it?

Short-cuts in explanation are often very fascinating. A short-cut in the present case is that Buddhism was suppressed by the persecuting Brahminism. Probably those who offer this explanation are influenced by the analogous case of Christianity. In its triumphant march, Christianity met a formidable adversary in Islam. The result of the conflict was that Christianity was driven not only out of the land of its birth, but practically out of Asia. Islam got into Europe too, but there it could gain no permanent footing. How Islam could drive Christianity out of the land where Jesus lived and taught is a matter for historical investigation. How the repeated efforts of the followers of Jesus to wrest the Holy Land from the hands of the Muslims failed is also a matter for historical investigation. Some westerners hold that just

as Christianity was suppressed in the land of its birth by violence, so was Buddhism finished in India. This explanation is quite fantastic. Islam, from its very start, was a militant church. In India, religious tolerance was almost a part of national character, not a matter of policy. There is no evidence that Buddhism collapsed as a result of religious persecution. It is equally fantastic to suppose that the followers of Buddha left India and migrated to other lands where Buddhism had secured a stronghold. If the number of Buddhists ran into millions, their migration to foreign countries in the absence of any transport facilities worth the name is out of the question. Another explanation offered is that Buddhists were reconverted to Hinduism as a result of religious discussions in which Shankracharya took a notable part. This ignores certain established facts about the constitution of human nature. A man's faith is not solely made of his intellectual convictions. It is the faith of his fathers, the faith of the group or class in which he moves and has his being. His Faith is largely an affair of Emotion. A man's habits of action and his emotional preferences and aversions do not change as quickly as his ideas may change. Conversion is not merely an acceptance of a new set of ideas. And how many men could participate in these discussions? It is not denied that these discussions played some part. Only it is suggested that such discussions could not have been the cause of the collapse of Buddhism, if it had a

considerable body of adherents among the general populace.

The real explanation is probably fairly simple. Buddha did not found a new Religion. The Order which he established was meant to purify public morals, and to put first things first, according to Buddha's conception. So far as spiritual realisation of the individual was concerned, his emphasis was on Yoga, possibly in an amended form. So far as work for the regeneration of the masses was concerned, his main emphasis was on the need of charity and love in social relations, as against the performance of Ritual. In regard to Ritual, he was outraged by the current practice of animal sacrifice. Before he obtained his *Bodhi*, he was once deeply affected by the distress of a sheep in a flock that was being led the same way as he was wending. The sheep had two young ones—one of them frisking about, sometimes on the edge of a dangerous precipice, and the other who, on account of a wounded foot, could not keep pace with the flock. Buddha lifted the little wounded lamb and thus relieved the distressed sheep. On enquiry, he found that the flock was being led to the court of a chieftain for a religious sacrifice. He accompanied the flock to the court and succeeded in persuading the chieftain to abandon the idea of the sacrifice. Charity, the positive side of *Abinsa*, became the cardinal point in his teaching and practice. A practical application of this principle to social organi-

sation was his protest against the Brahmanical hierarchy, based on the accident of birth. He admitted all men, without distinction, into his Order.

Now Yoga, the doctrine as well as the practice, was nothing new. And *Abinsa*, as we have seen, was the first among the recognised social virtues or *Yamas*. Buddha's Order was a reformist Order or Sect, probably one among a large number, just as we have now the Udasis, Nirmalas, and sects of various types. Now what was to be the fate of the Order? Buddha himself had said that it would have survived him for a thousand years, but due to the admission of women, its expectancy of life was reduced to one-half, i.e., to 500 years. Was he here playing the role of a prophet, or simply using his strong common-sense and calculating probabilities? He could easily foresee that the new movement would in course of time succeed in effecting the change that it was designed to effect in morals and social organisation; he could also foresee that as a result of this success and of lapse of time, the reformist zeal of his followers would abate in intensity; he could even foresee that, in course of time, the evils against which he protested would insidiously introduce themselves into the order, and the transformists would themselves be re-absorbed in the original mass. All this actually happened. The masses accepted the good points of the new teaching; the teachers became less zealous and, in course of time, fell a prey to vice and cor-

ruption. The new movement was largely confined to a section of *sadhus*. The masses listened to them with respect, possibly with reverence, as they listened to the *sadhus* belonging to other schools. Even now, on the occasion of a religious fair, ordinary pilgrims move from *akbara* to *akbara*, hearing divergent, often conflicting, discourses, with indiscriminating regard or disregard. The order founded by Buddha had its force spent and passed out of existence, realizing the ideal that it had preached about the destiny of the individual. Buddhism in India was not killed or suppressed; like an ordinary organism, its life came to an end, its life-force was spent.

To the South and the East, it went as a new Religion and found there a virgin soil. The Buddhism of these lands is Buddhism in its original form. In China and Japan, it did not find a virgin soil; there people had their own cults in well-defined form. The best that Buddhism could do there was to assimilate itself to the existing cults and produce a new synthesis. This it did. In India, it was nothing new, and so, in course of time, lost its distinct individuality. Many people make a mystery of its fate in India, where there is really no mystery. How often do we first raise a dust and then complain that we cannot see?

CHAPTER IV

VEDIC DHARMA

1. PERSONAL AND IMPERSONAL RELIGION

In the three foregoing chapters, an attempt has been made to offer an analytical exposition of three historical religions that today command the allegiance of millions of men and women. In dealing with them, attention has been focussed on the fundamentals of religion as conceived by them. In one important aspect, they are akin to one another—they are all personal religions. Christianity was founded by Jesus Christ; Mohammadanism by Mohammad, and Buddhism by Gautama Buddha. In all of them, the personality of a certain human being is central. Eliminate that personality and you eliminate much, almost all. However, the position assigned to the illustrious persons in the three religions is not the same. Jesus spoke with authority. This authority, he claimed, was derived from God, his Father. But Jesus was also a human being, and it would be rash to affirm that in all that he said or did, he exhibited himself exclusively as the Son of God. Mohammad did not go so far as to claim an element of divinity in himself; therefore, in whatever he said, he did not claim the authority that

Jesus had claimed. But the Koran contains nothing that Mohammad himself said. It claims to consist of messages that were conveyed to him by God through an angel. Mohammad does not reveal to us the will of God; it is God who reveals His will to Mohammad. Thus though the personal authority of Mohammad is lower than that of Jesus, the authority claimed for the Koran is much higher than that for the New Testament. Buddha does not claim that he was a divine being, nor that he was communicating what had been specifically revealed to him by God. He expressed his own views—the views of a man who thought he had attained enlightenment or *bodha*. He also added that he was not the only individual who had attained such a position. He disclaimed for himself or for any other Buddha the role of a Saviour or a Redeemer, even the role of an Intercessor. He said again and again that the Buddhas 'only point the Way.'

As against these religions, Vedic Dharma is impersonal in the sense that in it no particular human being has a position that sets him apart in a class by himself. According to the Vedic Dharma, every man, as such, can have direct relationship with God. The essence of religion is such a relationship between God and man. The Vedic Dharma lays great stress on this point.

2. HINDUISM OR VEDIC DHARMA?

The majority of writers, Indian and foreign, prefer

to speak of Hinduism, but I would rather not use the term. And this for two reasons:—first, because the name 'Hindu', Persian for a slave or a vile person, was given us by the Muslim invaders, as a term of contempt, and so should be abjured; secondly, because Hinduism today is a mere congeries of sectarian beliefs, and does not connote anything determinate. Some people look upon this catholicity as a strong point, and liken Hinduism to a circle that has no circumference. They forget that it has no centre either, and so is no circle or any figure at all.

What passes as Hinduism today has passed through several stages. Three of these stages deserve special notice. In its pristine form, it was the religion of the Veda, the religion taught in the four *sambitas*—Rig, Yajur, Sama and Atharva. Considerable literature was produced in the form of commentaries on the Vedic hymns. Some of these dealt with the performance of rites (*Karma Kanda*), while others were specially concerned with doctrine and worship. The two parts are known as the Brahmanas and the Upanishads. Many Hindus treat them as part of the Veda, but they are in the nature of auxiliaries and so their position is subordinate to that of the four *Sambitas*.

In the second stage, the central position is occupied by the two Epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. The central figures in the Epics are Rama and Krishna. They are represented as incarnations of Vishnu, but their human side is adequately recognised, even stressed. The

conception of a number of divinities characterises this stage. These divinities are not in concord with one another, but their differences and feuds are not overemphasized.

This is done in the last stage, the age of the Puranas. The Puranas are reputed to have been written by Vyasa, but this position is untenable. Even the lists of the Puranas, as given in several of them, do not tally with one another. They are store-houses of mythology and are full of sectarian teaching and recrimination. They treat of the various incarnations of Vishnu and Shiva. Idol-worship, which has brought Hinduism into so much disrepute, is the main contribution of the Puranas.

In the pages that follow, the teachings of the Vedic Dharma, or Hinduism in its pristine form, on the fundamentals of Religion will be presented.

3. WHAT IS DHARMA?

Dharma is generally rendered into religion in English, but the two terms do not convey precisely the same idea. The word 'religion' itself, as commonly used, is not free from ambiguity. It has been said that west of the Suez, Religion means a relationship between God and man; whereas east of the Suez, it means a way of life. Whether true or not, the statement implies that, according to some people, Religion is concerned with extra-mundane affairs, whereas, according to others, its main concern is with

human life, lived here and now. The analysis of the three religions given in the foregoing chapters will illustrate the point. The main object of human endeavour, according to Christianity and Islam, is to secure heavenly bliss. The conception of bliss in the two religions is not the same. In Islam, as William James pointed out, heavenly bliss is nothing other than sensuous enjoyment *beyond the grave*; whereas in Christianity, the company of saints and one's own dear ones looms large. For Buddha, the ideal was to live an immaculate life here, not with a view to securing a certain form of blissful existence hereafter, but to be rid of individual existence altogether. The divorce between the Here and the Hereafter and the almost exclusive emphasis laid on the Hereafter in Christian theology is responsible for the general indifference, even hostility to Religion that one finds so patent in the West to-day.

The cleavage between the Here and the Hereafter, the *loka* and the *parloka*, does not really exist. Our entire life is a continuous process. What is of value to me here has value for the hereafter as well; what is injurious to me here cannot be helpful to me hereafter. Dharma is what leads to the attainment of *abhiyudaya* and *ni-shreyas*, well-being here and the attainment of the final goal. The worshipper of the *loka* thinks that our present life is the be-all and the end-all for us; the votary of the *para-loka* thinks that, while embodied, the Soul is in a prison,

and our present life is a veritable Vale of Tears, a Valley of Death. But these are extreme views which miss the real point.

Etymologically, the word 'Dharma' means 'what sustains or supports.' Sometimes the word is used in a wide sense. We say that it is the dharma of fire to burn and of water to wet. So interpreted, the word may be rendered into 'Essence'. The essence of an object is the attribute that gives it its distinctive character, the attribute but for which it would cease to be itself. Man's *dharmā* comprises attributes or functions that make him man in the fullest sense of the term. Probably such a man does not actually exist anywhere, and is only an ideal pattern which we all seek to copy in our individual lives. Even so, the ideal man has a great significance for us. To have a proper conception of *dharmā*, we must have a proper conception of the ideal man. In order to have such a conception, we may first turn our attention to actual men and see what they are like.

4. HUMAN NATURE

Man, as we see him, is a psycho-physical being. In his physical aspect, he is a space-occupying object in the midst of other similar objects. Like many other objects, he is also a *living* object or an organism. Biology, the science of life, tells us how living matter differs from matter that is devoid of life. The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad

(V, 13) mentions the following characteristics of life:

(i) Life is Growth.

This growth may appear in the life of the individual as increase in the number of component cells, or in the form of production of new individuals of the same type.

(ii) Life is Organisation.

An organism is a Whole of Parts. The Parts differ from one another in structure and function, but they all work for a common end. Differentiation and Integration are the two essential marks of an organism.

(iii) Life is Assimilation.

The organism grows by absorbing food from its environment and transforming it into its own substance. Plants convert inorganic matter into organic matter. Animals and men mainly subsist on matter that has already been organised.

(iv) Life is self-defence.

All life seeks to preserve itself. In conscious beings, self-preservation is the most fundamental urge.

In the psychic aspect, man knows, feels and acts. I am now writing on human nature. This is a certain form of activity. I am engaged on it because I am interested in it. However, neither my interest, nor the will to write would be of any avail, unless I knew what I was to do and how I could do it. Psychology tells us about the pro-

cesses of knowing, feeling and acting. For it, all processes are on the same footing: they all deserve to be studied. But we do not merely observe processes; we also judge about them. The result of the process of knowing may be truth or falsehood; our appreciation may show a cultivated or a perverted taste; our actions may be right or wrong. The task of discriminating between truth and falsehood, beauty and ugliness, right and wrong is undertaken by three other disciplines—Logic, Aesthetics and Ethics. These deal with the Ideal as Truth, as Beauty and as Goodness. Psychology and these three disciplines help us in understanding the nature of the Ideal man, which *dharma* seeks to evolve.

5. THE MAIN PROBLEMS

We are now in a position to state the main problems on which we shall seek some light in the present chapter. Briefly they are—

(a) The nature of Existence or Reality.

We all start with Experience. Philosophy is the interpretation of Experience. The main question is whether this experience points to anything beyond itself. And, in case it does, can we know anything about what is beyond and behind experience?

In our experience, we look *out*, we look *within* and we look *up*. The interpretation of experience, in these three forms, leads to a reflective enquiry into the nature

of the World of Perception, of the World within us and of the Object of our Aspirations. Ontology splits into three problems and they are—

- (b) Cosmology,
- (c) Rational Psychology, and
- (d) Theology.

These problems constitute the theoretical part of our enquiry. On the practical side, we shall have to consider the nature of human good and how it can be realized. As this good can be realized in society, the structure and functions of society would also demand a consideration. The practical problems will be—

- (e) Personal and social Ethics.
- (f) Structure and functions of Society.

We shall take up the topics in the order in which they are stated above.

6. THE NATURE OF REALITY

We are now living in an age dominated by Science and Technology. Physics is the pattern of all sciences. According to the physicist, the physical world is what can be studied by Physics. The aim of Physics is to observe and arrange facts. It is concerned with phenomena or appearances. From unconcern about anything other than phenomena, there is only a short step to a denial of the non-phenomenal. Many scientists are in-

clined towards Phenomenalism—the doctrine that the phenomena constitute the whole of Reality. Substantialism or Realism maintains that phenomena have no independent existence; they imply or posit a substance which supports them.

For the substantialist, the main question is whether the substance posited is homogeneous or heterogeneous. According to Monism, Reality is all one homogeneous texture; according to Dualism, there are two distinct types of Reality, known as Spirit and Matter, or Subject and Object. Monism assumes two forms: according to Materialism, all reality is Matter; according to Idealism or Spiritualism, it is psychical in nature. According to Idealism, what we commonly call a physical object is in reality a collection of images, or a huge colony of souls. For the Spiritualist there is a further problem. Does a single Spirit constitute the whole reality or are there an indefinite number of Spirits? Singularism maintains that there is only one such Spirit—*Brahman* or God, according to Absolute Idealism, and the speculator's own self according to Solipsism; the Pluralist accepts the existence of an indefinite number of spirits, including the Supreme Spirit or God. The history of Philosophy is largely a discussion of these diverse and conflicting views.

Common-sense accepts the existence of Substance, a qualitative difference between Spirit and Matter, and the existence of a number of Spirits. It believes in Realism,

Dualism and Spiritual Pluralism. This view is in accord with the teaching of the Vedas. Rig. (I: 164, 20) has the following—

‘Two Birds, fast friends, cling to the self-same tree. One of them eats the delicious fruit of the tree; the other does not eat, but remains merely an on-looker.’

The Mundak Upanishad quotes this *mantra* and adds the following by way of explication—

‘On the self-same tree, the finite spirit, immersed in his enjoyments, deluded, grieves at his impotence. When he sees the Other, the Lord, care-free, and discerns His glory, his grief passes away.’ (III: 1, 9).

The same idea is expressed in Atharva X: 8, 32:—

[The finite Self] does not loose its hold on its neighbour (Matter), and does not perceive its (other) neighbour (God).’

7. COSMOLOGY

Under Cosmology, we shall confine ourselves to three points only—

- (a) The Origin of the World of Matter,
- (b) The nature of the Cosmic Process,
- (c) The duration of the present Aeon.

As regards the origin of the World, three views have attracted special attention—

- (i) The theory of Creation,

- (ii) The theory of Emanation,
- (iii) The theory of Design or Construction.

The theory of creation of the world of Matter out of nothing is accepted by Christianity and Islam. In both cases, the motive is to emphasize the Omnipotence of God. This view is open to a number of objections. Two of them may be referred to here. First, we have no experience whatever of Being coming out of Non-Being, or passing into it. All material change is mere transformation, a change of *form* in what has existed and will continue to exist. Secondly, no reason worth the name can be given why God, on a certain occasion, decided to abandon His solitary majesty, and create something other than Himself as a limitation. In case of Man in particular, the adventure proved disastrous. The Bible affirms and reaffirms that it greatly grieved God that He had created Man.

The theory of Emanation maintains that God did not create the world of Matter out of nothing, but produced it out of Himself, just as a spider weaves a web out of itself. If this happened on a certain occasion and the weaving of the mundane web is not the very nature of the Divine Spider, the second objection to creationism, referred to above, has to be met by the emanationist as well. The main difficulty for the emanationist, however, is this: If God is the Material as well as the Efficient Cause of the World, the latter should be divine in

character—should be spiritual through and through. The essence of Spirit is to be self-conscious, the essence of Matter is to be extended. Now between thought and extension there is all the distance there can be between two entities: they are, as has been aptly said, 'separated by the whole diameter of Being.'

According to the third view, the Vedic view, Matter is a self-subsistent reality and, as such, has always been there. But there is a lot of difference between mere matter and matter as Cosmos. The latter shows a certain orderliness or design. This is due to Divine activity.

(b) The nature of the Cosmic process is the main problem that Physical Science and Cosmology have to solve. Physical Science directs its attention to details, whereas cosmology contemplates the process as a whole. The most outstanding feature of a process, the very essence of it, is change. The Veda refers to the World as 'the World in perpetual motion or change (*Jagatyama Jagat*).' The presence of change is so all-pervasive that many people reduce all reality to mere change. We have referred to this view in the chapter on Buddhism. This change appears in two forms—construction and destruction, evolution and involution, opening out and curling inwards. We find innumerable instances of the two processes going on around us. According to the Vedic Cosmology, this is also true about the world as a whole. Cosmos succeeds chaos and is, in its turn, succeeded by

chaos. The alternation of *Srishti* and *Pralaya* is unceasing. 'As on previous occasions, the sustainer of the World produced the Sun, the Moon, the starry Firmament, the Earth and the intervening regions.' (Rig. X, 12, 190). Evolution and Involution succeed each other as do the Day and the Night, and are quite appositely likened to the latter.

(c) When did the *present* evolutionary process begin?

Strictly speaking, this is not a point very pertinent in a discussion of the fundamentals of Religion. We bring it in, just because modern science has produced a profound change in the conceptions of the western people in regard to the *size* and the *age* of the Universe. Instead of a pocket Universe, very limited both in time and space, scientists now speak of vast spaces and vast aeons. The British physicist, Sir James Jeans, writing in 1930 A. D., pushed back the origination of the Earth to *two thousand million years* ago. Several decades before Sir James Jeans wrote his book, Swami Dayanand had, on the basis of calculations made by the astronomers of ancient India, stated the *Srishti samvata* to be 1972.94 million and odd years. When these staggering figures appeared on his books in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, many of his countrymen smiled at the extravagance of the figures. How close do they come to the surmises of modern

* The Mysterious Universe, p. 12.

science? According to modern science, the cosmic process of Evolution is about half the way on. This too comes very close to the view of Indian cosmology that the duration of the present aeon will be 4320 million years.

We have been speaking of Cosmos and the orderliness that pervades it. This orderliness is the ground of all understanding. In its absence, the world would be unintelligible; every fact would be an isolated occurrence, having no significance. Physical Science starts with the assumption that the world is intelligible and its phenomena conform to Laws. The most prominent of the connections between phenomena is that of Causation. This connection is itself subject to the Law of Uniformity. All scientific knowledge presupposes the existence of these two Laws—Law of Causation and Law of Uniformity of Nature. If we include in the World the finite spirits who act as free agents, we have to recognise the operation of the Moral Law in the realm of spiritual activity. The Natural Law and the Moral Law are referred to as *satya* and *rita*. When the process of creation or fashioning of the world is described, mention is explicitly made of the establishment of *satya* and *rita*. When Immanuel Kant said that two things above everything else fill the mind of man with awe—the starry Heavens above and the Moral Law within—, he too was referring to *satya* and *rita*, which make the world a real cosmos,

an ordered whole.

The main points in Vedic cosmology may be recapitulated thus—

1. Matter is an independent substance. It is eternal and so are its changes.

2. These changes, broadly viewed, are of two forms—Evolution and Involution (or Dissolution). They alternate, as the Day and the Night.*

3. The World is an ordered Whole. The whole process is subject to Law, known as *satya*.

8. RATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY OR THE NATURE OF THE FINITE SPIRIT

We may now turn to consider the Vedic conception of the Soul or the finite Spirit.

The words 'finite Spirit' really sum up the essential nature of the human Soul. Materialism denies that it is a Spirit; Pantheism denies that finitude is anything more than a mere appearance. Let us consider these positions a little.

According to Materialism, matter is the whole of Reality; all else is only an effect of material change. At a certain stage in its evolution, Life appears. At a later

* The rhythm of Evolution and Dissolution has been carried to the limit by some thinkers. Frederick Nietzsche was of the opinion that as there are no limits to Duration, the story of the Cosmos, as unfolded in the present aeon or *Kalpa*, is an exact repetition of what has already happened in the past, and is likely to be repeated in the future.

This is Nietzsche's theory of Cyclical Recurrence.

stage, consciousness manifests itself. According to this theory, all that happens in the world is material change or a recording of the change—which is itself the effect of the change. Now there are many people who do not accept this to be a true statement of facts. How shall we decide whether the materialist or the anti-materialist is right? Materialism does not supply any clue to the solution. According to it, both the judgments are facts or mere happenings, and all we can do is to note them. Beyond this, materialism cannot take us. The *criterion* of Truth is not a psychic *fact*; therefore, it is not an object of observation. As Professor Joad has pointed out, even if materialism is a true theory, there is no means of knowing that it is true. The Spirit refuses to be turned into a mere material change, an effect of such a change or an attendant phenomenon. The very core of self-consciousness is the consciousness of *agency* or *determination*.

The agency or determination of the finite Spirit is also questioned by Pantheism, which maintains that there is no room for more than one Substance and that the one Substance is God. All else, including finite Spirits, has merely a phenomenal existence. Certainly, no mere aspect can *do* anything, it can only *be*. This view presents difficulties from two different sides: it gives a rude shock to our conceptions of Man and God. Man is a space occupying object among other similar objects; he is a living object and he is a conscious being; but above all, he is

an ethical person, a subject of rights and obligations. A mere aspect cannot be a subject of rights and obligations, certainly not a subject of obligations. If we accept the pantheistic view, our moral sense becomes a vain imagining. Freedom of action is implicated in moral responsibility. 'I *ought*, therefore, I *can*.' If we accept the pantheistic view, we have to dismiss the concept of human responsibility as a mere delusion.

On the other side, what are we constrained to think of God? It is not possible for me to shut my eyes to the existence of Evil in its diverse forms—Pain, Ignorance, depraved Taste and Vice. Some men are so lucky as to be able to do so, but I am certainly not one of them. Now who is affected by this Evil? If God is the sole Reality, *i.e.*, if He alone has substantial existence, Evil must be a part of His very being. We may be told that Evil does not really exist; it is a mere delusion. Who is the subject of the delusion? Who experiences it?

Last night I had a fear-dream. When I woke up, I found that I had been quite safe in my bed. My fear was *groundless*, but it was nonetheless *real* fear. I did feel the pain, though there was no valid ground for this.

The human spirit is finite: it is limited in power, in knowledge and in many other ways, but it is a substance and not a mere aspect or phenomenon.

We find the finite human spirit in association with a body. The body, as a composite object, has a begin-

ning and an end. Can the same be said about the human spirit? 'Some say that the Soul exists after the death of a man; others say that it does not exist. I would like to know the truth about it.'

This is the last of the three boons, which Nachiketa, in the Katha Upanishad, asked for from Yama, the God of Death. And this is what the Nachiketa in each one of us sometimes wants to know. We must now consider the question of personal immortality. Belief in personal immortality means that the individual spirit had neither a beginning, nor will have an end; that our present life is a link in a chain lengthening both ways, without any limit. Personal immortality may be defended on metaphysical or ethical grounds. The metaphysical ground is that, as a simple substance, the soul is incapable of being made or unmade. In the words of the Upanishad, 'it is not born, nor does it die; it was not produced out of anything, nor was anything produced from it.' The ethical ground is that in a world which is governed by Moral Law, such immortality is a rational assumption. The immortality of the Soul, said Kant, is a metaphysical implication of Morality. Strangely enough, this position is accepted by Christianity and Islam partially, but not in its entirety. They agree that Divine Justice demands that we must reap hereafter what we sow here, but they don't recognise that here, in our present life, too, we are reaping what we have *not* sown *here*. The logic of

Divine Justice compels us to admit pre-existence along with immortality. There are certainly differences between man and man—differences of opportunity, of capacity, of congenital disposition—which are not earned in the present life. How do men come to have such vitally different starts? On ethical grounds, pre-existence and immortality both stand or fall together. 'My conclusion,' says Mc Taggart, 'is that any demonstration of immortality is likely to show that each of us exists through all time—past and future—whether time is held finite or infinite.'

9. THEOLOGY

The nature of God is the central problem in Theology. The attributes of God can be considered under three heads—

- (i) Metaphysical attributes, i.e., attributes that belong to God in His own nature.
 - (ii) Governmental attributes, i.e., attributes that belong to Him as the controller of the World.
 - (iii) Ethical attributes, i.e., attributes that belong to Him as the ordainer of Moral Law; or as the dispenser of awards to free agents for their deeds.
- (i) *Metaphysical attributes.*

Under metaphysical attributes, two attributes stand out pre-eminent—Spirituality and Infinitude. Both of

these are indicated in the term *Paramatma*. God is a pure Spirit, free from all taint of corporeality. He is not subject to birth or death, growth or decay. This disposes of the question of God's assuming a bodily form even temporarily, as a God-man or an incarnation. As a Spirit, God is not merely conscious, but also self-conscious. He is a Person: He can think of Himself as 'I'. Some philosophers look upon personality as a limitation, and so deny personality to God. They refer to him as a supra-personal Being. But really the word means nothing to us. Either God is a self-conscious Being, or merely a name for the totality of objects or occurrences. According to the Vedic conception, God is a Spirit among spirits. According to some thinkers, the very conception of personality implies the existence of a number of persons related to one another. The very large number of Vedic prayers have no meaning, except on the assumptions that there are spirits to offer prayers and there is a Spirit that can receive and acknowledge them.

God is free from the limits of finitude. My knowledge, my power and my sphere of activity are very limited. The more a man knows, the more does he realize the magnitude of his ignorance. My power is infinitesimal. The most tragic aspect in the situation is that I cannot control even myself. God is free from these deficiencies of finitude.

He is all-knowing. No one can escape His vigilance

'Whosoever stays somewhere or moves about, whosoever defrauds or maltreats others or does something secretly, is watched by God. When any two persons are engaged in secret deliberations, God is present there as the third, and knows all about it.' (Atharva: IV: 16, 2).

God 'knows the seeds, the motives of all actions.' (Sama, I, 1, 3, 7).

God is the controller, the sustainer of all. The Forces that seem to control the World are really manifestations of His Energy. This is finely illustrated in the Upanishad in the form of an allegory, thus—

Brahman once won a victory for the gods (the elemental forces). The gods felt elated and thought that the victory was theirs. *Brahman* knew about it and appeared to them. They could not identify the Apparition. They sent Agni (Fire) to ascertain about the Apparition. Asked about himself, Agni boasted that he could consume all that there was on the earth. The Apparition placed a blade of grass before him and invited him to consume it. Agni tried frantically, but could not do it. Disconcerted, he went back and reported to the gods about what had happened. Vayu (Wind) then approached the Apparition, but he too could not blow away the blade of grass. Later, Uma (*Brahmavidya* or metaphysical knowledge) informed Indra that the Apparition was no other than *Brahman*, and that all the power that the gods (elemental forces) assumed as theirs, did in reality

reside in *Brahman*.

Vedic Theism is Monotheism. A large number of Veda *mantras* state the position in unambiguous terms. Atharva (XIII, 4, 16-18) declares that 'God is not one of the two, three or four; not one of the five, six or seven; not one of the eight, nine or ten.' Immediately after, it is said positively that 'God is One, without a Second, One only.'

Such being the case, how can we explain the gross superstition and mythology that pass for Hinduism today? The explanation is not far to seek. God, as conceived in the Vedas, is not a blank attributeless entity, hardly distinguishable from non-entity. He has a nature that can be apprehended from a number of points of view. In referring to Him, the Veda *mantras* use a number of names. The sense was quite obvious in Vedic times, but later the various names applied to the one God began to be interpreted as distinct divinities. The misconception became common in the age of the Epics and became riotous in the age of the Puranas. This is rather startling, because a number of Veda *mantras* really leave no room for such a misconception. We may quote only two *mantras* to make this plain:

'He is One, but the wise call Him by various names. He is addressed as Indra, Mitra, Varuna, Agni. He is the shining Garutman. He it is that is named Agni, Yama and Matrisvan.' (Rig. I, 164, 22).

'He is Agni, He is Aditya, He is Vayu, He is Chandrama, He is Shukra, He is Brahman, He is Apa, and He is Prajapati.' (Yaju, XXXII, 1).

(ii) *Attributes in relation to the Universe.*

Those who believe in a theistic interpretation of the World may believe in Creation, Emanation or Design as the origin of it. We have already noted that, according to the Vedic doctrine, God did not create the world out of Nothing, nor did he transform a part of Himself into it. He fashioned it out of the stuff that was available. We have also seen that an essential element in this fashioning was the establishment of Laws to regulate the cosmic process. These Laws are commonly known as the Laws of Nature. The little connective 'of' is liable to be grossly misunderstood. The Laws are not ordained by Nature; they are constitutive of Nature. It is their operation that brings Nature, as an ordered whole, into being. The parts of a whole, as distinguished from the mere constituents of an aggregate, exhibit a mutuality of adaptation that indicates that an Intelligence directs and controls the whole. This is the basic idea in the theory of Design taught in the Vedas.

How is God related to the World? According to Pantheism, God is identical with the World. 'God=Universe'—is the simplest statement of the pantheistic position. In its historical development, Pantheism has assumed two

forms: in one, the emphasis is placed on God; in the other, on the Universe. The result is that, in the first form, pantheism becomes acosmism (denial of the existence of the World); in the second form, it is hardly distinguishable from atheism. At the opposite end against pantheism is the view known as Deism. The Deist believes in the existence of God, but he holds that God is not concerned with the World in any way. He does not reveal His will directly or indirectly. All that we know is known by the use of our Senses and Reason. The Deists are particularly opposed to miraculous evidence. The religious belief of the majority of men is Theism. According to Theism, God is neither unconcerned with the World, nor identical with it. He is immanent in it and also transcends it. His activity is manifest everywhere in the World, and yet it is not exhausted by what happens in it. 'He moves and moves not; He is farther than the farthest and nearer than the nearest.' The Immanence of God is often expressed by saying that the World is the Body of God, and God is the animating Spirit of the World. To make the conception easily comprehensible, the Earth is described as His foot, the mid-regions as His abdomen, the starry Heaven as His head, the Wind as His breath and the cosmic Light as His eye. God is 'the source of all cosmic power, the source of light to all that is luminous. He pervades all Space and is the indwelling Spirit of all that moves and moves not'. (Yaju, VII, 42) 'He, out of one seed, produces the manifold.'

In the words of the Upanishad, 'The sun does not shine there, nor the moon, nor the stars, nor these lightnings and much less this fire. When He shines, everything shines after Him. By His light is all this world illumined.' (Svet. VI: 14).

(iii) *Ethical Attributes.*

By ethical attributes of God we mean the attributes that He has in His relationship to man. Man is a natural being, subject to the Laws of Nature or *Satya*, but he is something more than merely natural. As a spirit, he has ideals that he wants to realize; as a free spirit, he sometimes decides not to realize them. He has the capacity and often the will to do wrong. In a World where there is Moral Law besides Natural Law, we have to enquire how inequity is dealt with.

The Veda *mantras* refer to God as King and Lord, as Father and Mother, and as Friend and Helper. He is similarly conceived in other religions as well, though with a difference of emphasis on the attributes. In some cases, His might is emphasized; in others his love or mercy. When power is used arbitrarily, it leads to nepotism; when it is discriminating, it assumes the form of stern Justice. Love or Mercy is understood to imply excessive considerateness, in disregard to the strict demands of justice.

The essence of Divine Justice is that Virtue and Vice of free agents have their appropriate rewards. Correspond-

ing to the Laws of Causation and Uniformity that operate in the physical world, there is the Law of Karma that works in the moral sphere. As we sow, so must we reap. *We*, i.e. all of us who act as free agents. There must be *equivalence* between the desert and the recompense; and the standard employed to determine the equivalence between the two must be the same for all. There should be no arbitrariness and there should be no partiality. If unrighteousness is to mean damnation, it should mean this for all; if righteousness is to mean redemption or happiness in any form, it should mean this for all. There is no sense in dealing with me in one way, and with my neighbour in another way, on the mere ground that he is, or says he is, 'a believer', and I am not. If Faith has value, it should help the 'believer' to be more righteous than a non-believer can be. It is righteousness that is to be judged.

The principle of Justice—to each one his due—seems to be quite simple, but many people recoil from its rigid application. Many of us would whole-heartedly support its application in regard to others, but would like to have an exception made in regard to ourselves or those whom we embrace in our enlarged selves. Apart from these cases based on attachment to self, there are cases where men recoil from the application of the principle on general or humanitarian grounds. Their inmost feeling may be expressed in Hamlet's words—'Use every man after his desert and who should 'scape whipping?' The flesh is weak

and everyone offends against the Law. If men are to be dealt with in accordance with the requirements of Justice, it would go hard with us all. Christianity accepts the view that the demands of Justice must be fully met, but, seeing that man is not able to pay the 'wages of sin', it makes God Himself responsible for the payment. God expiates for the sins of men through the sacrifice of His only beloved son, Jesus. This is the Christian doctrine of Vicarious Atonement.

Let us consider the two views a little.

Taking life as it is, is whipping always bad?

It *is* bad when it comes to me undeserved; when it comes to me as payment of my dues, it may not merely be not bad, but be positively helpful to me. It is the punishment of guilt that emancipates the guilty man from his slavery to guilt, that restores him to the position of a free agent. As Hegel put it, it is the *right* of the offender to receive his due in the form of punishment and have the taint removed. So far as the dispenser of the awards is concerned, the whole conception of moral Law becomes meaningless, if the Law is not enforced.

The Christian conception of vicarious atonement has always baffled me. It was God who created man so weak; He could have given him greater strength to resist temptation. Again, it was God who determined the principle of *equivalence* of desert and recompense—so much punishment for so much guilt. He might have been more con-

siderate in fixing the two terms of the equation. My chief difficulty is the utterly unsatisfactory conception of Justice implied in the doctrine of vicarious atonement. According to some Christians, Jesus only received the punishment that was earned by the guilty; according to others, it is not merely the punishment, but the guiltiness as well that was accepted by Jesus. In either case, it is assumed that the requirements of Justice are satisfied, if punishment is awarded. This certainly is not so; the punishment must be awarded to the perpetrator of the guilt himself and to no other. It is not actions that are punished; it is the doers of actions that are and ought to be punished. Vicarious Atonement is a negation of the principle of Justice. The Veda *mantras* again and again refer to God's Mercy and His Justice. Are these two attributes incompatible? They are not. Justice, whether distributive or corrective, connotes treatment, in the form of overt action, meted out to adjust some account; Mercy or Love is a mental attitude that aims at the well-being of another. When a father caresses his son, it is an expression of affection; when the son misbehaves himself and the father canes him, the caning too is an expression of affection. In both cases, the father means well to the son. We may say that Love is mainly concerned with the end, while Justice is mainly concerned with the means. Considered in this light, Divine Love and Divine Justice are not only compatible, but they support each other. God is both our

Father and our Judge. Love and Justice are really one and the same attribute.

10. THE CONDUCT OF LIFE

So far we have been mainly concerned with the theoretical side of our problem. But Religion is not merely theology or a doctrine. It has a practical side as well, and this, for the ordinary man, possesses greater significance. What are we to make of our lives? What is the meaning of human welfare? What are we to do to realize it?

Man lives and grows in a community. We are all members, one of another. We can realize ourselves in a community. We may turn our attention now to Personal and Social Ethics.

From the ethical point of view, man is a subject of Rights and Obligations. An individual who has rights but no obligations is a tyrant. A man who has obligations but no rights is a slave. Generally there is in a community no room for more than one tyrant; there is no such limitation for slaves. The ethical individual is neither a tyrant nor a slave, but a subject of rights and obligations. Social Ethics is largely concerned with a determination of our rights and obligations.

The final goal of human endeavour may be described as Self-realization. We cannot divide a man's life into two independent sections, but we may profitably consider it in its personal and social aspects separately. From the indi-

vidual point of view, a man is to aim at Efficiency. What does this mean? As a living organism, a man must live the full span of the normal human life, in health and vigour. We all understand something about health and vigour, but what is the normal span of life?

Yajur Veda (XL : 2) states in explicit terms that 'a man should desire to live a hundred years, a life full of activity'. In the same Veda, we are asked to pray for 'a life of a hundred years, in possession of powers of cognition and action, and independent on others.' Elsewhere we pray that 'when death does overtake us, it should come in the wake of ripe old age—a hundred winters'.

As against this, contact with the West has made us familiar with the Biblical 'three score and ten' as the normal span. The German philosopher, Arthur Schopenhauer, has made some interesting observations on this point. He holds that the Biblical conception has done considerable amount of harm by grossly understating the normal span. It is more correctly stated, says he, in one of the Upanishads of the Veda—100 years. If seventy years were the norm, men who die at this or about this age should die painless deaths, which, however, is not the case. The best guarantee of a painless death is that a man should manage to pull through beyond 90 years. Men who die in the tenth decade sometimes die standing. 'They do not die, they only cease to exist.'

On the mental side, efficiency mainly depends on

wisdom and courage. In the *Gayatri mantra*, we pray that 'God may guide our Intellects on to the right path'. A primary need is the possession of a good intellect. 'Effulgent Lord! endow me, to-day, with the wisdom that is an object of adoration to the wise and the good.' (Yajur, XXXII, 14).

Courage means freedom from Fear. The source of fear may be real or merely imaginary, the world outside or our own fancies, our foes or even our friends.

'May we be free from fear from the mid-regions, from the starry heavens and the earth! May we be free from fear from all directions—from behind, before, above and below!

May we be free from fear from friends and foes, from the known and the unknown; free from fear during the night and the day! May all beings on all sides be friendly to us!' (Atharva, XIX, 15: 5-6).

A vigorous body, a keen intellect, a stout heart—these are the very substance of efficiency in an individual. But as we have already remarked, the individual grows and works with other individuals. Other animals too live and work together. The prerogative of men is that they also think together. Language is the great instrument of corporate thinking. The basis of all social evolution is a keen sense of social solidarity. What is the basis of this solidarity? Many are of opinion that the sense is born of

fear, and aims at the security of the individual. Instructed by bitter experience, men realize that the best security against lawless and unruly elements in the community or outside is voluntary submission to a central authority and placing its mandates above personal inclination. The philosophy of Religion furnishes us with a more elevated ground. Ethical philosophy also does the same. According to Immanuel Kant, the essence of morality is the recognition that humanity, in all its forms, is not a mere means, but an end also. This recognition necessarily leads to fair play; it is a negation of Exploitation. This view comes very close to the Vedic view according to which social solidarity is based on the realization that, as spirits, we all have a common nature. 'He who beholds all beings in the Self, and the Self in all beings, manifests no antipathy to any one'. (Yajur, XL, 6)

To men imbued with this spirit, the instruction in the Veda is—

'March together; have joint deliberations; let your minds be in accord with one another. Work in unison, just as the celestial orbs have been doing.' (Rig. X, 191; 2).

We in India have suffered grievously because the community has not marched together; certain sections have been left far behind the main body. The world too is suffering because of the conflicting ideologies, and placing

greater trust in Force than in negotiation.

How can this ideal be realized?

I can think of nothing more effectual than a realization of the Vedic conception that our life, when properly lived, is a Sacrifice or *Yajna*. The performer of a *Yajna* does not put his oblations in the *kund* within closed doors. He flings the doors open, and does not know, does not care to know, who will benefit by his sacrifice. In a wider sense, the word *Yajna* means the doing of any deed of public utility in the spirit of service. The best that a man can do is to use the best that is in him for the general good. What could be a higher aspiration than the following?—

'Let my life be a life of dedication ! Let my vital Breath, my Eyes, my Ears, my Intellect, my Spirit be dedicated to service! Let my Vedic lore, my understanding, prosperity and knowledge be dedicated to service ! Let the Sacrifice itself be made in a spirit of abnegation!' (Yajur, XVIII: 29).

We are not mere repetitions one of another. Each one develops in his own peculiar line. Men who constitute the vanguard in a community are generally those who develop some special faculty in an extraordinary degree. Such men are Leaders of Thought and Action, great Artists, great Seers, and Moral and Religions Reformers. They have all great potentialities. The outcome of their labours mainly depends on the spirit in which they work. Even the average man is a hero, an artist, a thinker, a

public worker on a small scale. Each man should examine himself and find out his own strong point. Is vigour or vitality his strong point? Is he a painter, a singer, a thinker, a saint, a missionary, a successful business-man? Whatever he has—be it vital breath, an eye, an ear, intellect, spiritual force, material resources—let him dedicate it to common well-being. Whatever sacrifice he does make, he should make in a disinterested spirit. This is treating life as a *Yajna*.

This is a very high ideal. How can it be an operative force in our lives? The main business of each generation is to imbue the coming generation with something of this spirit. This is the task of socializing the younger members of the community. During the period of their immaturity, the task is entrusted to certain social institutions working within the community. Two of the institutions that play the leading role are the family and the school or college. After maturity, the community as a whole, through its machinery of Government, or through public opinion, tries to keep the individual within proper bounds.

The family is the nucleus of the social organisation. It is the great nursery of human virtues. It has certain advantages for performing its great function. It is limited in size and so provides a favourable condition for the promotion of intimate relationships; it is based on community of life in a very real sense of the word, and is dominated by love; it provides scope for a variety of relationships in

a small circle—the same individual has to function as son, brother, husband, father, master etc. The basic fact that constitutes a family is the marriage of a man and a woman who have attained maturity. Marriage, in the true sense of the word, is the integration of two personalities into a single and richer personality. The two individuals united in wedlock cease to be two separate entities—an 'I' and a 'Thou'; they begin to talk and think of themselves as 'We'. Now they belong to one another. Marriage so conceived presupposes that the persons concerned are mature enough to understand the significance of the new relationship into which they enter, and are able to discharge their new responsibilities satisfactorily. This rules out marriages in which one or both the parties are immature, and marriages in which there are great incongruities of temperament or age. Such a relationship can subsist between one man and one woman only—no one can surrender his personality in fragments. This rules out polygamy and polyandry. Thirdly, the relationship is meant to be a life-long relationship. The obligation is equally binding on both sides.

The Vedic marriage is a sacrament performed not only in the presence of men and women, but also with God as witness. The bride and the bridegroom walk round the sacred fire and the bridegroom declares that they are joining for a living, for power, for prosperity, for happiness, for founding a new family, for enjoyment in various seasons and finally for having an integrated life. Then they

both make the following solemn declaration—

‘I place thy heart into my resolves. Let my mind work in unison with thy mind. Follow me with single-mindedness. May God make thee one with me !’

This pledge is given by each to the other. There is no room here for a higher or a lower status as between the two.

The family is the sanctuary of tranquility, and we all know what an important ingredient of Happiness tranquility is. For family concord, the Vedas have the following simple but highly significant instruction—

‘The resolves of the son should be in accord with the resolves of the father; his mind should be in accord with the mind of his mother. The wife should address the husband in sweet and soothing words.’

‘A brother should entertain no malice against a brother, nor a sister against a sister. Have your minds and your resolves in accord, and speak to one another so as to promote happiness and well-being.’ (Atharva, III, 30, 2-3).

When the child goes to school, the school shares with the home the responsibility of socialising him. As against the home, the school has two advantages. There the child meets his fellows, and cannot dictate terms as he can at home. The teacher is expected to be sympathetic, but is not as tender as the mother. At home, the child largely follows the ‘Pleasure principle’; at school, he is introduced to what is known as the ‘Reality principle’. When the

individual passes on the college, the task of socializing him is mainly the responsibility of the college. If an individual wants to be a bully, he meets with his fellows, and even those who can out-bully him. Much depends upon the intimacy of contact between teachers and students and the general tone of the institution, which is largely a reflex of the personality of the head of the institution.

The community, as such, deals with the individuals directly when they are adults, and its main task is to keep them within bounds. It does not rely on love as the family does; it does not rely on exhortation as the school mainly does; it issues orders and wants them to be obeyed. These are all directed to one main purpose—general acknowledgement and observance of the recognised rights and obligations. Rights and obligations are correlative—in a double sense. When an individual has a right, other individuals are under an obligation to respect the right; and secondly, the individual himself is under an obligation to use his right in such a way as to promote general well-being. Through its Laws, the community determines the system of rights and obligations. What are the fundamental rights of the individual?

The following are generally accepted—

- (i) The Right to Life.
- (ii) The Right to Property.
- (iii) The Right to Contract.

(iv) The Right to preserve one's Dignity and Honour.

(v) The Right to get a fair deal in general.

Even the Right to Life has not always been conceded. The ancient Romans thought that the parents had the right to take away the life that they had given. No one now will accept the view. It is open to the parents to decline to produce children, but once a child is born, even when it is in the mother's womb, it acquires a right to live. Life essentially implies opportunities of self-expression. The individual has the right to work, to produce some value and to enjoy the fruit of his labour. This is the Right of Property. Slavery is a denial of the right of freedom of action and of the possession of Property. Life in a community depends on co-operation. This is possible only if there is respect for understandings given and agreements entered into. This confers the Right of Contract. There should be a guarantee that the individual and the family can live in dignity and honour. And finally, each individual has a right to be treated as a human being and receive a fair deal.

The obligations of the individual can be easily deduced from the rights. They are—Respect for Life, Respect for Property, Respect for Undertakings given, Respect for Honour, and the willingness to follow the principle of 'Live and let live.'

All these obligations are stressed in the Vedas and the Vedic Literature. A very neat and compact statement is made in the Yoga Darshana, under the title 'Yamas'—the very first of the eight organs of Yoga. They are—

- (i) *Abimsa* (Non-violence).
- (ii) *Satya* (Truthfulness or respect for Contract).
- (iii) *Asteya* (Non-stealing or respect for Property).
- (iv) *Brahmacharya* (Continence or respect for Chastity and Character).
- (v) *Aparigraha* (Non-exploitation or fair dealing in economic relations).

11. THE RELIGIOUS ATTITUDE

When a man adopts a vocation, that of a lawyer, for instance, he undertakes to devote a part of his time and energy to legal work. If he is also a member of a Legislature, legislative work too claims part of his time and attention. He also spends some time with his wife and children and in some places of recreation. In a way, these occupations divide his life into a number of compartments. Morality or Religion is not a compartment of this type: a man cannot be moral or religious from 8 A.M. to 10 A.M. and remain immoral or irreligious during the remaining hours of his waking life. Morality and Religion are not fragments of life, but a tone, a colouring of life as a whole. No one can be moral or immoral in the abstract. In every concrete situation in which he acts, he can act morally or

immorally. He can do his legal work honestly or dishonestly; can be a conscientious or unconscientious legislator, can be a virtuous or vicious member of the family. Thomas Carlyle speaks of a workman who, 'with every stroke of the hammer, broke the whole decalogue.' Similarly, Religion is not a specific section of life; it is rather an attitude adopted in regard to all sections of life. It is a way of life.

Our Experience is a Subject-Object relation. In one form, this relation is one of mere contact. On the side of the Subject, this means Awareness or Cognition. In another form, the Subject is aggressive and modifies the object in some way. This is Activity or Volition. A simple case is that of Attention, when the object attended to is isolated from the setting in which it lies embedded and is individualized. In the third form, it is the Object that is aggressive and modifies the Subject. This is exemplified in an Emotion—Fear, Anger or Joy. Knowing, Willing and Feeling are recognised as the three main forms of Experience. The human mind is almost obsessed with the desire of simplifying matters as much as possible, and tries to reduce the three forms or aspects to one only. In regard to the religious consciousness, this desire to simplify is particularly keen. Some people look upon Religion as a kind of Knowledge and identify it with Theology or Philosophy; others regard it as a form of Action; others again think that the essence of Religion is Feeling or Emotion. The three

views are popularly known as *Jnana-marga*, *Karma-marga* and *Bhakti-marga*. They are all partial or incomplete views of the nature of Religion. Religion is concerned with the whole of life, with our Experience in its entirety and not with one aspect of it only.

The *Jnana-marga* is indispensable, though not self-sufficient. It is necessary, because no one can do anything unless he knows what he wants to do and how he can do it. No one can do anything worth doing, unless he knows what is worth doing. No one can be truly religious, unless he has a tolerably reasonable *theory of values*. The religious attitude also presupposes that the values are realizable. We live in a Universe which is a reservoir of tremendous forces. Our own insignificance in this Universe is appalling. Does the Universe support us in the pursuit of these values or does it thwart us? or is it unconcerned with Values? Physical Science is not a way of living, but a way of thinking. For it, the physical world is the object of study, and it consists of occurrences or phenomena. *Values* do not occur; they are not among the phenomena. Some scientists, therefore, are of the opinion that the Universe is indifferent to values after which man aspires. Thomas Huxley, in his *Evolution and Ethics*, expressed the view that the Universe, with its law of the fittest, is against man. As a moral and social being, man is not to follow Nature or even to acquiesce in its order, but to combat it. Religion assumes that the cosmic order is a divinely ordain-

ed order, and so cannot be hostile to ethical values which are the objects of human aspiration. Some theists maintain that the cosmic order supports the moral order and provides the medium of the operation of the latter. Those who do not go so far are content with saying that the world in which man lives is at bottom a friendly sort of world and offers some assurance that the interests we have most at heart will not be lost. The religious attitude thus implies on the side of *Jnana* that

- (i) the values which we aspire to produce are genuine values, having an objective existence, and are not mere creations of fancy,
- (ii) the Universe in which we live is neither hostile nor indifferent to our Aspirations, but is friendly to them, and
- (iii) this is grounded on the belief that the cosmic order is ordained by the same Power as ordains the Moral Order.

The knowledge of Brahman or God is the highest step in man's ascent to his self-realization. In the words of the Veda, 'Knowing Him, does the individual obtain emancipation from Death: verily, there is no other way of securing emancipation.' (Yajur, XXXI, 18).

The Katha Upanishad elaborates the same point in the following words—

'The holy name which all the Vedas expound, which

all penances proclaim, the object of desire for all seekers after knowledge, that holy name I tell thee briefly—it is Om. Without doubt, this Imperishable One is Brahman; this is higher than anything else. He who knows this Imperishable One has all his desires satisfied.

This is the best support, this is the highest support. Knowing this support, a man obtains exalted position in the world of Brahman.' (Katha, II: 15-17).

This position is attained by stages. A necessary prerequisite is that a man should be leading a pure, chaste life. The Supreme Self, pure and effulgent, is within us, but, as the Mundak Upanished insists, 'it can be perceived only by those who have acquired self-control and whose imperfections have been destroyed.' This leads us to the consideration of *Karma-Yoga* as an element in the religious life.

The relation of Morality and Religion is very close. Gautama Buddha identified the two. In modern times, Mathew Arnold described Religion as 'Morality touched with Emotion,' while Immanuel Kant considered that Religion means looking upon moral obligations as commands of God. The moral problem arises in the presence of divergent, incompatible claims. In a situation where there is a single claim that seeks satisfaction, there is no room for making a choice, and there is no moral problem. When there are more claims than one and they cannot all be satisfied, the situation calls for a choice. Ethics

maintains that all human beings, as rationals end as ends-in-themselves, have claims on us. Ethics seems to stop here. The essence of Religion is the recognition of God as a claimant, as the supreme claimant on our consideration. This is a vital point. We can appreciate its significance by contrasting the view-point of the ancient Greeks with the Indian point of view. With the Greeks, Ethics was a branch of Politics. All duties were duties to the State. A man was expected to care for his wife and children, because this was implied in his being a good citizen. A good man was, according to them, a good citizen of a good State. But a State may be good or may not be good. The standard of goodness is not devised by the State, but is there already, to which the State is to conform. According to the Indian view, all duties are ultimately owed to God. A man is to be faithful to his wife, because otherwise he offends against the Order ordained by God.

The content of religious obligation and moral obligation is largely identical, but there is some difference between the two. Religious obligation includes ethical activity as well as some form of *Karma-Kanda* or religious performance. This latter may be in the form of worship or performance of some ritual, individually or with others. The performance of *Yajnas* and *Sanskaras* is the major part of religious ritual with us. Two points may be briefly touched upon in connection with such rites.

First, they are intimately connected with communal or social life and foster the sense of social solidarity. When a child is born, he becomes an additional member of the community; when he is named, he acquires a certain individuality in the social group; when he is initiated, he becomes a conscious participant in the cultural life of the group; when he marries, he assumes the responsibility of becoming the head of a new family. All these and similar occasions have a profound social significance and are solemnised with proper rites, on the fundamentally correct assumption that they do not merely concern an individual or a family. The social significance of the occasions is now being increasingly recognised. There is a considerable and growing body of public opinion which demands some kind of control on the birth of children, on their education and on their marriages. In regard to the *Yajna* which generally is a part of all religious ritual, we have to guard against a common misconception. There is no element of magic in it. The essence of magic is the coercion exercised on a deity by the performer of the rite, to secure certain favours or concessions. In the Vedic *Yajna*, the object is to purify the atmosphere and to offer joint prayers on auspicious occasions.

For the common man, the essence of Religion lies in Devotion or *Bhakti*. The *Jnana-marga* is accessible only to the select few, and to them too at the end of an arduous endeavour; the *Karma-marga* is a serious challenge, which

the common man would like to evade, if possible. Some intellectuals come to his help by solemnly affirming that all Action is more or less tainted, and so it is better to seek refuge in Inaction. *Bhakti* is within the reach of all; it does not need high intellect, nor a will capable of great deeds. It needs *passivity* and self-surrender. The ideal of a devotee is to become an instrument in the hands of the Lord. *Bhakti* comprises three distinct functions—Adoration (*stuti*), Supplication (*prarthana*) and Meditation (*upasana*). In Adoration, the worshipper is mainly concerned with the nature of the Object worshipped; in Supplication, mainly with his own needs and difficulties; in Meditation, the sense of duality tends to be lost. The Christian Churches have laid special stress on *stuti*, the congregational singing of hymns of praise of the Lord; with the Muslims, silent prayer or supplication is the main feature of worship. The Buddhist monk spends a lot of his time in Meditation. The ordinary Hindu wants to induce a certain emotional condition and is not very particular about the object of worship. The Vedic Dharma recognises the need of all the three factors. As regards the object of adoration, it must certainly be *adorable*. The spirit of man must not bend to anything but to a Higher Spirit. A large number of Vedic *mantras* are concerned with the nature of God. A few of them have already been referred to. Nine consecutive *mantras* in a Rig Veda chapter directly answer the question—Who is the

Lord to whom we shall offer our humble adoration? They are given below:—

“God was present before the fashioned world was there; He was the one Lord of all. He it is who sustains the heavens and the earth. To Him do we offer our humble adoration.

To the Lord who is the giver of life and of strength, who exercises sway over all there is, whose laws the celestial orbs obey, whose protection is life immortal, who is the Lord of Death—to Him do we offer our humble adoration.

To the Lord, who, in virtue of His pre-eminence, is the sole Ruler of the world, inanimate and animate, who controls bipeds and quadrupeds—to Him do we offer our humble adoration.

To the Lord of the snow-clad mountains and the terrestrial Oceans, to the Lord whose arms are all the Directions (whose sway extends on all sides)—to Him do we offer our humble adoration.

To the Lord who sustains the luminous heavens and the steady earth, the immortal blissful Lord, the upholder of all bodies whirling in space—to Him do we offer our humble adoration.

To the Lord who calms the agitated, who casts His glance on the distressed, within whom (within whose realm) the Sun rises and shines—to Him do we offer our humble adoration.

To the Lord who created the vast waters which

engender energy, the Lord who is the sole life of the celestial Orbs—to Him do we offer our humble adoration.

To the Lord who in His greatness witnesses all that is done, who owns Power, who is the fount of all Beneficence, the Lord of Lords—to Him do we offer our humble adoration.

To the Lord whose essence is Truth, the Creator of the earth and the celestial bodies, the Creator of the waters, the giver of joy—to Him do we offer our humble adoration. May He not smite us to Death!" (Rig. X, 121: 1-9).

In prayer, each supplicant prays for help in his personal difficulties. The Vedic prayers are for goods of life for men generally: for health, for long life, for prosperity, for domestic happiness, for wisdom, for purity and nobility of character. There are also prayers for general well-being.

The final stage in worship is *Upasna*, which, means coming close to God, closer than we are in Adoration or Supplication. According to the Yoga discipline, there are three steps in Meditation—*dharna*, *dhyana* and *smadhi*. In *dharna*, we bring the object of worship to the focus of our consciousness; in *dhyana*, we see that the object continues to occupy the focus; in *smadhi*, there is consummation of the process of Contemplation: the sense of separateness vanishes.

The religious attitude, as conceived in the Vedas, means an integration of *Jnana*, *Karma* and *Bhakti*.